



THE PROBLEM OF CONDUCT

A STUDY IN THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF ETHICS

BY

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ὁ ἀριεῖταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ

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PREFACE

THE present work is practically identical with one which obtained the Green-Morrell Philosophy Prize in the University of Oxford for the year 1899, the topic proposed for discussion to competitors being "the Reciprocal Relations between Ethics and Metaphysics." Except for the occasional removal or addition of a few lines of text or explanatory footnote and the correction of obvious inaccuracies, the Essay appears now in the form in which it was submitted to the judges. In the numerous cases where I am indebted to previous writers I have, except where the allusion was manifest of itself, regularly endeavoured to indicate my obligation in a footnote, should any exception to this rule be discovered I trust the omission will be put down to unintentional oversight.

There is one obligation, however, which seems to me to call for special acknowledgment here. To the writings of my friend, Mr. F. H. Bradley, especially to certain portions of his *Appearance and Reality*, I believe myself to owe, directly or indirectly, almost everything in this Essay that possesses any value. The frequent reference to Mr. Bradley's works in my footnotes are far from being an adequate expression of my debt.

It may seem strange that a work originally written in connection with a prize instituted in commemoration of the late Professor T. H. Green should contain a whole chapter of polemic directed against certain of his doctrines. If any

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY—THE PROBLEM STATED

Cet objet n'est pour le yeux fermé sans l'autre jamais de les ouvrir,
que de vivre et la philosophie — DECAIR

ALL students of Aristotle must be familiar with that philosopher's habit of prefixing to what he calls the "physical" investigation of a difficulty, that is the detailed examination of the concrete form in which the puzzle in question is suggested by the fact of ordinary experience or the more systematised results of scientific observation, a preliminary "logical" discussion of the same problem in its most general and abstract shape. It seems on the whole convenient to make this Aristotelian distinction the basis of the arrangement of our present essay, and to devote this chapter and the next to a general preliminary investigation of the same material which we propose to handle in a more concrete and "physical" manner in the rest of our work. As the ground we intend to cover is extensive, and as our progress will sometimes have to be circuitous, it is as well, even at the cost of some repetition, to present the reader at the outset of our inquiry with a kind of sketch-map of the route we shall pursue, and the goal we hope to reach, so that he may from the first be in a position to judge whether or not it is worth his while to make the journey in our company. It is of course a disadvantage inseparable from this method of procedure that our results, as presented in their most general form in our preliminary statement, must appear vague and abstract, and I would therefore warn my reader that the full meaning of the conclusions which will be suggested by these introductory chapters, as well as the full cogency of the evidence upon which they are based, will only be manifest in the course of that more detailed

examination of ethical facts which will form the main body of this essay. With this prefatory word of explanation, I turn at once to the subject which is to be considered in the following pages—the relation between ethics and metaphysics

It seems clear that in all cases in which we can say that two sciences stand in close connection with one another, the nature of the relation between them must be conceived in one of two ways. Either one of the two sciences is actually derivative from the other and dependent upon it for its principles and methods, or else they are independent and co-ordinate branches of inquiry, and the relation between them is simply one of mutual contact and support at various points. The difference between the two cases is too obvious to need a lengthy explanation, but we may in passing illustrate it by comparing the relation of mechanics to geometry, or of acoustics to kinematics, with the very different relations which, in the view of the most competent authorities in either science, obtain between psychology and physiology. Psychology is not applied physiology as mechanics may be said to be applied geometry. It is an independent science, with a subject-matter and a method which are peculiarly its own, and by which it is distinguished from all other branches of knowledge, but, in virtue of the close connection between the mental events investigated by the psychologist and the cerebral events studied by the physiologist, physiology is constantly throwing light by analogy on the dark places of psychology, while psychology seems already to be reaching the stage of development at which it may reasonably be expected in its turn to exercise an important influence on the investigations of the cerebral physiologist¹. In any particular case, then, such as that now under consideration, we have to decide between three alternative possibilities. (1) It might conceivably be the case that ethics is, in the fullest sense of the word, a mere derivative and offshoot of metaphysics, based from beginning to end upon the results of the superior science, and consisting, in fact, in nothing more than the systematic application of metaphysical first principles to the special subject-matter furnished by the facts of human conduct. (2) Or again, ethics might prove to be the primary and superior science, and metaphysics might be

restricted merely or mainly to the task of ascertaining what general conclusions about the nature of the universe can be drawn from the data supplied by ethics. (3) Or last, it may be that neither science is, properly speaking, derived from or dependent upon the other. Each may have, quite independently of the other, its own peculiar subject-matter, and its own special way of dealing with those facts of experience upon which all sciences are in the last resort based. Each may be capable of, or rather may require, separate treatment on its own merits, both may suffer if either is directly subordinated to the other, and yet one or both may contribute to the other either special problems for solution, or principles by which the solution of such problems may be effected. If we decide for this third view of the case it will of course, still be necessary to ask in detail what are the particular points at which the spheres of study of the metaphysician and the moral philosopher touch, and which science has the most to learn from the other.

It is not difficult to see that each of the three views just enumerated has had its advocate among the distinguished philosophers of ancient and modern times. The first opinion, indeed, according to which ethics is regarded as a mere series of deductions of truths about morality from the principles of metaphysics, can hardly be said to have been consistently adopted by any school of Greek philosophers except perhaps the Neo-Platonist, but it is clear from the famous description of the functions of dialectic in *Republic*, p. 511 (with which compare also 531 C ff) that Plato's leanings lay in this direction though in his actual treatment of moral questions he shows himself for the most part more dependent upon psychology and everyday observation than upon metaphysics. The same tendency to make ethics a mere subordinate branch of metaphysics appears early in the history of modern philosophy in the striking and original but little-known *Ethica* of the Belgian Cartesian, Arnold Geulinx, and has profoundly influenced at least the form of the most famous of all modern treatises on moral philosophy, the *Ethics* of Spinoza. In more recent times we have, of course, on the same side of the question a whole host of illustrious names, from Kant and Hegel and Schopenhauer at the beginning of the present century down to Professor Green and the rest of the distin-

gunshed English interpreters of German idealism at its close. The second view has perhaps never been held by any thinker of importance in an absolutely unqualified form. No one, so far as I know, has maintained that the whole of metaphysics should be treated as a mere series of deductions from the propositions of ethical science. But an approximation to this standpoint is to be found in the attitude of that numerous class of philosophers who attribute to specially ethical considerations a preponderating though not an exclusive, significance for metaphysics. Such is, for instance, the view of Lotze, as expressed in the dictum that "the true beginning of Metaphysic lies in Ethics" (*Met* ii 319, E T). Such again is the position taken up on more than one occasion by Professor James in his *Principles of Psychology*, and more explicitly defended with considerable vigour by his fellow-countryman, Professor Howison, in an essay contributed to a recently published work on "The Conception of God"¹. For the third view, which may perhaps without prejudice be called that of "common-sense," it will be sufficient to adduce the weighty authority of Aristotle—whose criticism of the Platonic "Idea of Good" in *Ethica Nicomachea*, i 6, so far as it has any serious value, turns upon this very point—in the ancient, and of Herbart in the modern world. It will be the main object of the present essay to show, by a detailed examination of some of the most important facts and concepts of ethics, that this interpretation of the relation between the two sciences is the only one that is not beset with insuperable difficulties. More definitely, we hope to show, as against the metaphysical moralists, that ethics is as independent of metaphysical speculation for its principles and methods as any of the so-called "natural sciences", that its real basis must be sought not in philosophical theories about the nature of the Absolute or the ultimate constitution of the universe, but in the empirical facts of human life as they are revealed to us in our concrete everyday experience of the world and mankind, and sifted and systematised by the sciences of psychology and sociology, finally, that where ethics touches upon the borders of metaphysics, it does so, no other wise than physics or any other considerable body of empirically ascertained truths, by

¹ See especially *op cit* p 126 ff

suggesting for the critical reflection of the metaphysician certain types of problem and certain general ways of looking at the world as a whole. We shall maintain, in fact, that ethics should be regarded as a purely "positive" or "experiential" and not as a "speculative" science. The argument by which we shall support this contention will be of a threefold character. We shall first of all offer some reflections of a general kind upon the points in which a science founded upon metaphysics ought to differ from one that is purely positive and experiential, and shall invite the reader to judge for himself how far these characteristic marks of a metaphysical origin are to be found in the science of morals. Next, we shall try to meet and answer some of the reasoning by which the metaphysical moralists have sought to show that there can be no satisfactory theory of conduct apart from a metaphysical foundation. We shall then go on, in the main body of our essay, to show the impossibility of basing ethics upon a pre-existing system of metaphysics by a detailed examination of some of the principal facts of which ethics has to take account as well as by incidental criticisms of the assumptions which have to be made by the defenders of the view against which our argument is directed. In the course of this examination it will also appear why we cannot subscribe to the view of those who attribute to the leading concepts of ethics a full and final metaphysical truth and validity which they deny to the concepts employed by the physical sciences. Thus, though the problem proposed for our investigation is properly speaking metaphysical rather than ethical, it will require for its solution a fairly comprehensive survey of the whole body of facts which fall within the purview of the science of conduct, and it is upon the completeness and self-consistency of this review of the facts of the moral life that our success in answering the metaphysical question will ultimately depend. It is for this reason that I have called this essay, I hope not too ambitiously, a study in the "Phenomenology of Ethics" rather than in the "Metaphysics" of conduct.

We begin our inquiry, then, with the following very abstract and general question. By what distinguishing marks may a science that has a metaphysical origin be known from one that has not, and what advantages in the way of certainty, univers-

ality, or completeness should the propositions of such a science enjoy over those of its base-born "empirical" kindred? Before we can answer this question we must first explain as clearly as we can the sense in which the terms "Metaphysics," and "Empirical Science" have been and will be used in the pages of this essay. I need hardly say that the statement we are about to make does not claim to be a complete and scientific definition of the term "Metaphysics", still less can it pretend to be an adequate description of everything that has at one time or another gone under that name. A formal and complete definition of the science would no doubt be necessary in a set treatise upon metaphysics, where the course of the exposition would offer ample opportunities for testing its accuracy and comparing it with rival definitions, but the assumption of such a hard and fast formula in a work like the present, where it would have to be introduced, if at all, without adequate examination and discussion, could not but seem arbitrary and capricious. The following remarks, then, are offered, not as a finally satisfactory and scientific definition, but simply as a general description of the class of inquiry which will be meant when the name "Metaphysics" reappears in these pages. At the same time, though I do not claim that our use of the word agrees precisely with the sense that has been put upon it in any of the great philosophical systems, I believe it will be found to cover in a general way most of the investigations which have been known as metaphysical. First of all, then, let us make it perfectly clear that when we speak of "Metaphysics" as being in some way opposed to the "empirical" or "positive" sciences, we do not for a moment intend to suggest that metaphysics is in the last resort independent of what is commonly called "Experience," or the actual "facts" of everyday life. It may reasonably be doubted whether any great philosopher has ever really held the view, which popular thought, not without some excuse, ascribes to Plato and Hegel, that it is possible to a large extent to determine the nature and contents of the universe in advance of all experience, by an exercise of creative thought, and that the knowledge attained by speculative activity of this kind is superior in certainty and dignity to the information which comes to us through more ordinary channels. At any rate, whatever may

have been the meaning of these great philosophers, we may be allowed at the outset of the present discussion to avow our own disbelief in the existence of any such "high *priori* road" to knowledge. When we speak of "Metaphysics" as a real and valuable branch of science, what we intend by that name is a series of analytical inquiries based, like those of any other science, in the last resort upon the actual experience of facts of ordinary life, and having for their object nothing more mysterious than the complete and consistent description of those facts as a whole in the simplest possible terms. If by "Empirical Science" be meant a science consisting in the complete and consistent description of facts of experience, then metaphysics, as we understand the word, may rightly be said to be itself an "empirical" science. If we prefer to avoid this form of expression and to keep the name "empirical" for certain branches of knowledge which differ as to their handling of the facts of experience from metaphysics in a way which we are about to explain, our reason is not that the word as applied to metaphysics would be in itself a misnomer, but rather that we wish to avoid misleading associations arising from the history of the terms. We hesitate to call metaphysics an "empirical" study for no other reasons than those which ought to make us think twice before applying the same epithet without preliminary explanation to geometry or arithmetic. All knowledge, we admit, is in the last resort "empirical," in the sense that it arises out of *facts*, that is, out of experiences which we cannot altogether fashion as we please to suit our own convenience, or our own sense of what is fitting or desirable, but have largely to accept as they come to us. And further, we have admitted that all knowledge not only begins with such facts or experiences, but has for its object nothing more than the full and coherent description of them in the simplest possible terms. As this is a statement which is, verbally at least, in direct contradiction with what seem to be at present the reigning philosophical views, it is perhaps desirable to explain our meaning a little more fully, in order to guard against certain natural misunderstandings. In what sense, we may be asked, can you assert that knowledge consists simply in the description of facts of experience, when it is notorious that the accounts of the world and its contents which

are put forward by our scientific men as the latest outcome of experimental research are, whatever else they may be, in almost every particular, utterly unlike the facts which the plain man believes himself to be experiencing in his daily life. To draw our illustrations from the most fundamental assumptions of the physical theories which have the widest currency among us, when does experience present us with anything corresponding to the impenetrable and indivisible atom, the imponderable ether, the absolutely empty space of which our scientific textbooks tell us? How can an account of the world given in terms of elements which *ex hypothesi* are never perceived as they really are, be called a description of the facts of experience? Or, to make our argument independent of even so generally accepted an hypothesis as that of the atomic constitution of matter, how can the attempt to describe *facts* of experience ever lead us to construct a picture of the world and its processes from which the secondary qualities, colour, sound, smell, taste, which constitute so important an aspect of the facts of life as we experience them, are rigidly banished? A science which reduces all these qualitative differences between the contents of experience to differences in the shape, size, grouping, movements, etc., of solid particles may, one would think, give us the *truth* about things, but can hardly be said to describe the facts, if by fact one means something which is or might be the content of an actual experience¹. Hence it is not surprising that it should be very generally maintained that it is the first characteristic of all true science to get behind facts and the mere description of them, and to substitute for mere description, explanation of the actually experienced by reference to some more ultimate reality which does not as such enter into the content of any one's experience. An argument of this nature is so plausible and contains so much real truth that it is worth our while, even at the cost of a slight digression, to make the meaning of our own rival contention clearer, and to show how our own statement about the objects of science is consistent with a full recognition of all that is true in this apparently opposing doctrine.

¹ The argument would appear even more plausible if we took into consideration the recent attempts of physicists to get behind the solid atom itself. Cf. Ward, *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, chaps. II-VI *passim*.

And first, a word in explanation of two important terms which we have hitherto used without definition—"experience" and "fact" Of experience, as of all ultimate psychical realities, it is impossible to give any but a verbal explanation If any one does not know what experience means, or what it is to "experience" light or heat, pain or pleasure, no words of ours will make the matter more intelligible to him. It is utterly impossible to throw any light upon the nature of experience by reference to any still simpler and more universal concept But by way of a merely verbal definition, and in order to enable the reader to identify with precision in his own inner life that which we mean by "experience," we may perhaps say that "experience," in the sense in which we are using the word, is the most general term by which we can describe the fundamental character of all that goes on in the inner life of a *subject*¹—that is, of a centre of consciousness which is so far developed as to be capable in even the most rudimentary fashion of singling out and recognising identical recurring qualities or aspects within the general mass of its otherwise undifferentiated organic consciousness, and of guiding its behaviour towards its environment by the recognition Experience is thus, on the one hand, a term of narrower extent than consciousness or sensation For it is perhaps at least conceivable that there may be, in the words of Mr Bradley (*Appearance and Reality*, p 28, ed 1), "creatures whose life consists, for themselves, in one unbroken simple feeling," and within the limits of such a consciousness as theirs there would be no room for that recognition and distinction of identical aspects within a larger whole of organic sensation upon which we have made "experience" depend² Indeed, even without

¹ I do not say a *self*, because, so far as I can see, the recognition of a permanent system of connected contents, such as the presentations of my own body, or my organic sensations, as constituting myself, and the permanent opposition of this system of contents first to all similar systems or selves and then to all other contents whatsoever, is a late and highly complex derivative from the more simple form of distinction described in the text

² Against this distinction between sensation and experience it is only fair to quote the weighty authority of Dr Ward, who dismisses the doctrine adopted in the text with something like impatience (*Naturalism and Agnosticism*, ii 122) "There is still another view that it would be wearisome, and as I think needless, to discuss, which should perhaps be mentioned. I refer to a doctrine, now in favour with certain psychologists, that I have ventured to call Presentationism According to this, there are at starting only presentations, and these by their interaction in due course give rise to a special presentation, or rather complex of presentations, called the subject

suggesting the existence of such very problematical beings, we might plausibly contend that even in our own life-history there has been a stage at which consciousness existed before the rise of anything that can be called experience. For it seems quite unmeaning to talk of experience, unless there is something present which is experienced, in our own technical language, all experience is the experience of a *subject*, the apprehension of a special content which is distinguished from the rest of the accompanying mass of consciousness, and it is not easy to see how any content gets this distinctness to begin with, except upon the basis of a repetition of identical stimulus amid varying concomitants. Either the content so distinguished is identical with some former content and gets the benefit of this identity in the shape of recognition, or the content itself is novel and the accompanying mass of undifferentiated consciousness already familiar, and the distinction is due to the effects of novelty, but in either case the general condition involved is the same, viz the partial identity of the present contents of consciousness with its habitual contents in the past. Thus, in both cases the rise of experience, as distinguished from merely "feeling" consciousness, seems to depend in the last resort upon repetition of identical stimulus in a varying content. Hence it is at least conceivable that in the early stages of our own ante-natal existence some vague consciousness may have been developed before the repetition of partially identical stimuli had made the first simple distinction between a conscious content and its setting of general organic sensation possible.¹ On the other hand, experience, as we understand the word,

such a doctrine I believe we are entitled summarily to rule out of court till it is made plain to us how there can be an experience with no unity, an experience that nobody has." As to the question of terminology, we are fully correct in the dictum that a psychical life which is not a unity built up out of a multitude of varying contents does not deserve the name of an experience. As to the question of fact, however, can we not at least conceive, as suggested in the passage quoted in the text from Mr Bradley, of a life confined to a single feeling, and if so would such a life offer any possibility of distinguishing between the fact of presentation and the "feeling presented"? It is precisely the fact insisted on by Dr Ward, that *sensatio*, as we know it, is always the *experience* of *some one*, that seems to me to call for explanation. On this point I am glad to believe myself in substantial agreement with Dr S. Hodgson (*Metaphysics of Experience*, p. 59).

¹ I do not forget the point on which Mr Stout lays so much stress (*Archival Psychology*, n. 7 ff.) that mere repetition of a stimulus commonly fails to lead to recognition apart from the existence of "an interest in some kind of whole of which the object forms part." I take it the first contents to be recognised as recurring are such as have, in virtue of their marked pleasure or pain values for the organism, just such an interest attaching to them.

includes states much more primitive than any which can be identified in purely human experience. It is a feature not only of human, but of much, if not of all, animal life. It is thus not to be confounded with that highly developed and exceedingly complex form of consciousness which is generally known as the perception of "external objects." The perception of an "object," in the ordinary acceptation of the term, implies the recognition of a host of distinctions which scarcely seem to exist during the first few months of life even for the human consciousness¹. And, in our mature life, there are experiences which we should very properly hesitate to call experiences of *objects*. Thus we certainly "experience" a toothache or a thrill of pleasure, though no one would call either the pain in the tooth or the feeling of pleasure an "object." In another connection it might be interesting to discuss the question how much is involved in the perception of what we commonly call objects, over and above that simple identification of an identically recurring element in the contents of consciousness which we have named "experience." For our present purpose, however, further investigation on this point seems superfluous. We will only add to what we have already said, that it follows from our account of "experience" that we or any animal may be said to have experience just in so far as we "attend to" or are "aware" of the contents of consciousness, or again, just in so far as we are capable of "learning," in consequence of the nature of those contents, to modify or control our first instinctive ways of reacting against our environment². For "attending to" or "being aware" of a presentation seems to be no more than another name for the fact that that presentation is successful in detaching itself more or less

¹ e.g. resistance, extension in three dimensions, definite shape.

² Thus in practice the measure of an animal's capacity to "experience" will be the degree to which it succeeds in adapting its primitive and instinctive reactions to special variations in the stimulus by which they are provoked. And we shall naturally conclude that, where the lines of instinctive reaction are comparatively fixed and rigid, and admit of little purposive and progressive specialisation as in the case with insects, there is little or no "experience," but where, as among the higher vertebrates, instinctive reactions are relatively plastic, all admit of a great deal of great and progressive specialisation, there is also the opportunity for an excellent example of the kind of progressive adaptation which is characteristic of "experience," (see what Nelson relates of the changes in the behaviour of the black-headed scorpion consequent on the rise of the flicker in 1876 (*Philosophical Magazine*, chap. viii. p. 100).) That these changes are due to "experience" is a conclusion which seems clear from our account.

completely from the larger mass of undifferentiated consciousness by which it is, on any occasion of its occurrence, attended, and it is, again, just in proportion as a given presentation thus detaches itself from its varying setting that it becomes possible to make it the signal for a definite movement of reaction, or in other words, to learn from it how to behave when it recurs¹

So much, then, for "experience," now a word as to the meaning of the term "fact of experience." Not everything which is experienced is a fact of experience. For instance, when a man "sees" a ghost or "hears" a banshee cry, he is undoubtedly experiencing something, but few of us would be prepared on his testimony to accept the ghost or the banshee as facts guaranteed by experience. And we might, again, be doubtful how far the "experiences" related at a Wesleyan class-meeting present a really faithful description of the *facts* of the narrator's spiritual life. In a word, a fact of experience seems to mean the contents of a *true* description of our experience, and by a true description, again, we mean an account of the matter which is, so far as we can see, free from internal confusion or discrepancy, in fact, a *consistent* narrative. If the statement that truth is altogether a matter of internal consistency at first appears strange, its strangeness is only a result of our vicious but inveterate habit of forgetting that the experiences of every conscious subject form a continuous and unbroken whole,² and of treating mere fragments and scraps torn from them

¹ I need hardly say that "attention" is used here to denote not merely that supreme degree of exclusive pre-occupation with a connected system of contents which is ordinarily so called, but any and every degree of concentration of consciousness upon the identical qualities which characterise the repeated presentation of a given content to the comparative neglect of the accompanying organic and other sensations. For some good remarks on the connection of attention with recognition see H. Cornelius, *Psychologie als Erfahrungs-Wissenschaft*, p. 35.

² I do not mean to say that there are no breaches in the continuity of our conscious life, for instance in moments of dreamless sleep, but simply that, if such gaps exist, they do not directly reveal themselves as such. This seems to be proved by the fact that no one has as yet been able to say whether the supposed suspension of consciousness in dreamless sleep, trance, etc., is more than a mere hypothesis. H. Cornelius, indeed (*Psychologie*, p. 120), asserts that on awaking from sleep we are immediately and directly conscious that there has been a pause in consciousness, apparently for the reason given on the next page, that many or most of us seem able to say with fair accuracy how long we have slept. There can be no doubt about the fact, but I should have thought the most probable explanation was that we have here a mediate judgment based on our past experience of the regularity and rate of the organic processes of digestion, etc., which have been going on during our sleep. In any case, we are not directly aware that consciousness has been altogether suspended, but only that our consciousness of the familiar objects which we recognise again on awaking has been *interrupted*.

What has no bearing on and is not represented in some way in my own personal life is, for me at least, a mere nothing. For me, as for one of Leibnitz's monads, the universe only exists in so far as it succeeds in mirroring itself in the course of my own inner life.

We can now see what was implied in our assertion that science consists in the full and coherent description of facts of experience. We mean, of course, in the first place that science, like the unsystematic everyday thinking which precedes it, and out of which it arises, aims primarily at the correlation of facts of experience, at supplying links and threads of connection by means of which we may safely infer from the nature of our present experiences what we might expect to experience under different conditions of time, of place, of material environment. By supplying such links, which are themselves inaccessible to direct observation, science teaches us to infer from what is happening now what will happen to-morrow, from what I experience on the surface of the earth what I should experience if I could be placed on the surface of Venus or Mars, from the observed effects of the creation of a partial vacuum what would be found to follow if I could create a perfect vacuum, etc. Thus we might say science begins its operations with experienced matters of fact as its data, and though the hypotheses by the aid of which it proceeds are often, as we shall see directly, of a kind that can in no sense be called matters of fact or experience, its object in the use of them is to lead up once more to the knowledge of things that will, or would under specified conditions, be matters of fact and experience. But this is by no means all. In a science which should adequately realise the ideal of explanation which all sciences set before themselves, the connecting-links or hypothetical constructions by which science does its work would themselves in their turn be at least possible contents of experience. This requisite of scientific method is expressed in the technical language of the logicians by the demand that the causes assigned in a scientific explanation of phenomena should be *verae causae*, or should be known actually to exist. This does not, of course, mean that the existence and operation of the causes and forces in question should be matter of direct observation under normal conditions of experience, but that under a

judged by our standard of internal consistency, any statement of "facts," any account of the contents of experience, which introduces the agency of ghosts has at least a strong presumption against it. The case of the hypothetical ethered medium for the transmission of light-waves is different and even more instructive. As far as one who, like myself, is altogether a layman in these matters can perceive, the hesitation which many well-instructed persons seem to feel about admitting the existence of such a medium is due entirely to the feeling that it is not, as far as we know, a *causa vera*. Under no conditions of which we know has the existence of such a medium as the theory requires ever been the part of an actually experienced content. Nor can we imagine any conditions under which its existence and qualities ever could be experienced. The whole region of directly experienced existence presents us with nothing in the least analogous to the all-pervading, unatomic, perfectly elastic and non-gravitating medium which is hypothetically assumed to account for the phenomena of the transmission of light. Hence it would seem, at least if our assumption as to the facts of the case is correct, that the existence of such a medium must always remain more or less hypothetical. As a working hypothesis the theory justifies itself, if the deductions which we make from it about the course of observable events tally with the results of actual observation, but it still remains a question whether our hypothesis, useful as it is for working purposes, is a real hypothesis or not, that is, whether the intermediate links which it interposes between the data of experience from which it starts and the conclusions, verifiable in actual experience, which it infers from those data could themselves, under any conceivable conditions, be the contents or a part of the contents of an actual experience. With the atomic theory the case is, in the opinion of some of its adherents at any rate, different. It is, of course, true that we can no more see an atom than we can see the supposed medium through which light-undulations are propagated. But while experience presented us with no analogue whatever of the luminiferous ether, it does present us with bodies which in some of their qualities do exhibit an analogy with the supposed atom. And again, it has been found possible to calculate the number of atoms contained in a given volume of

a given substance, and if these calculations have any serious value, it is clear that they do amount to an approximate statement of the conditions under which the corpuscular constitution of bodies might be made a content of actual experience, to know the size of an atom means to know approximately how many diameters it would have to be magnified in order to become visible under the microscope. Thus both because the theory of the atomic, or at any rate of the corpuscular¹ constitution of matter presents a close analogy with the state of things disclosed in actual experience, and because it seems possible, within certain limits at any rate, to know something of the conditions under which its assumptions themselves might be made matter of direct experience, this theory stands on an entirely different footing, in respect of its "reality" and truth to fact, from an hypothesis like that by which the phenomena of the transmission of light are now explained². In the one case the state of things asserted by scientific hypothesis is not altogether too remote from what we can find on a large scale as the result of direct experiment and observation of the constitution of large masses of matter, and the conditions under which this state of things might be put to the test of direct experience, though unrealisable in practice, —for of course we cannot, for instance, grind a lens powerful enough to magnify a molecule into visibility, or construct a balance delicate enough to indicate its weight,—at least admit of consistent theoretical formulation. In the other case the combination of properties ascribed to the ethereal medium by the hypothesis is entirely unlike any combination with which experience, whether at the level of unsystematic everyday observation or at that of careful scientific observation of phenomena, presents us, and it seems impossible to imagine any set of conditions under which this disagreement between actual experience and scientific theory would cease to exist. Hence it is reasonable to suppose that the corpuscular theory

¹ I add this qualifying clause, of course, to meet the objection that absolute *indivisibility* could never be directly experienced.

² But it must be remembered that, as Dr Ward so admirably argues (*Naturalism and Agnosticism*, 1 109 f.), the individual chemical molecule as such is never a presented reality. Its proportions and properties are all reached by statistics which rest upon the examination of considerable masses, and the results thus obtained *may* have only the same value as those of economic and anthropological "averages." The "typical" atom or molecule of oxygen may be as much a creature of theory as the "typical" labourer or the "typical" Australian.

represents "facts" of experience much more accurately than the undulatory hypothesis. The latter, for all we can see, may perfectly well be a mere "symbolic" representation of the processes of nature, that is, it may serve as a convenient working hypothesis, by the aid of which correct inferences may be made from one set of experienced contents to another, and yet the intermediate links of theory by which the inference is brought about may as they stand be as purely imaginary as the irrational quantities which play so prominent a part in symbolic algebra.

Putting together the results we have arrived at in the last paragraph, we may say the ideal of scientific explanation is explanation by reference to a *causa vera*, that is the resolution of the complex processes of change with which experience presents us into simpler processes, in which every term is such as would, under definitely known conditions, be itself directly experienced. Or, more in detail, in a scientific explanation which satisfies our ideals of complete explanation, the terms which are not accessible under normal conditions to direct experience ought to contain nothing (a) that is known to be inconsistent with the formal conditions of experience in general, and also (b) nothing known to be inconsistent with the material conditions of the experience of the terms themselves. Thus a finally satisfactory scientific explanation would consist from beginning to end of actual or possible contents of experience, and would, in fact, correspond to the important philosophic concept, which we owe to Avenarius,¹ of a "pure" experience—*ie* an experience of a content "which in all its component parts has for its pre-supposition constituents of our environment and nothing else," or, as he also expresses it, "an experience free from all admixture of anything which is not itself experience." And it is this ideal of explanation which we had in view in speaking of the object of science as the "complete and consistent *description* of the facts of experience in the simplest possible terms." It need hardly be said, however, that this is an ideal to which no science ever in practice attains. Every science, in its explanations and calculations, makes a greater or less

¹ *Kritik der reinen Erfahrung*, 1 4-5, *Philosophie als Denken der Welt*, etc., pp. 42 44

use of terms which are, or, for all we know, may be merely symbols for events and processes which we are as yet unable to apprehend, and perhaps never shall succeed in apprehending, in a form consistent with the formal or the material conditions of experience. In geometry, for instance, we have the circular points at infinity, in algebra the square roots of negative quantities, in theology transubstantiation¹. As it stands, the symbol $\sqrt{-1}$ is a downright contradiction, it tells you to perform on -1 the same arithmetical operation which when performed on 4, say, gives us 2, and from the nature of the case the operation in question is impossible. Hence, until you bring your symbol once more into touch with experienced reality by giving to the signs $-$ and $\sqrt{\quad}$ a new meaning, according to which they stand for some operation of which we have actual experience, $\sqrt{-1}$ is a merely "symbolic" or "imaginary" quantity, it represents an operation which may be introduced into the subsidiary steps of an actual calculation with useful results, but which remains in its real nature as much of a mystery to the operator as the electric spark to the child whose hand touches the key by which a circuit is broken.

In so far, then, as any science falls back in its search for explanations upon such mere symbols of unknown processes, it falls short of the true ideal of scientific explanation, and its account of phenomena fails to reach the level of "pure" experience. Hence we can see exactly how much truth there is in the view of "explanation" which makes it consist in something more than mere description. It is of course true that the explanations given by any science must always transcend such description as is possible apart from the most thorough-going and minute analysis of natural objects and processes. It is false, however, to say that explanation must transcend the complete description of phenomena reduced to their simplest terms. For the very ideal of explanation is, as we have seen, the description of experienced phenomena in

¹ I borrow the first and last of these illustrations from Clifford's *Common Sense of the Exact Sciences*, chap. iv (contributed by Professor Karl Pearson), p. 223. I may remark that the change in the significance of $\sqrt{-1}$, as we pass from ordinary algebra to quaternions, is a good example of the way in which a mere symbol of an impossible operation may by an alteration of interpretation be made to represent a real "fact" or operation actually possible in experience. Cf. *Common Sense of the Exact Sciences*, p. 190.

terms which are in their turn matters of experienced facts—in terms, to use the convenient phrase of Avenarius, of pure experience. The notion that explanation must always transcend description as such arises simply from failure to see that the “symbolic” explanations of our existing sciences, which are in no sense descriptions of matters of possible experience, are due to mere imperfection of knowledge, and need in their turn, as science progresses, to be retranslated into the language of possible experience before they can be accepted as the truth about anything. It is this misconception of the relation between explanation and description which has begotten all that host of pretentious explanations of phenomena by reference to faculties and occult qualities and forces against which Positivism has, to its credit, done yeoman’s service. And it is to the same secret delusion that we owe it that philosophers still allow themselves to be perplexed by the infinite contradictions and obscurities inherent in the confused popular ideas of activity and causation,¹ two mere “symbolic” concepts which will surely vanish for ever from our text-books as soon as we seriously set ourselves to translate our metaphysical symbolism back into language which has a definite meaning as applied to the actual processes given in experience. In short, though the statement that scientific explanation is always

¹ For an account of the confusions see below the chapter on “Causation and Activity” in *Appearance and Reality*. Averrines, *Philosophy for Beginners*, etc., pp. 45, 46. The same tendency to rest in merely “symbolic” statements of explanation which explain nothing, shows itself in the fondness of spiritualist philosophers for vague expressions such as “force” and “energy.” What definite ideas, for instance, can we connect with the current phrases “spiritual force,” “psychical energy”? It would be an excellent discipline for a writer on philosophical topics to substitute for the word “force,” wherever it occurs in the course of his reasoning, some more definite expression, such as “rate of change of momentum.” “Energy,” again, should never be used to denote anything that cannot be calculated in terms of mass and velocity, without a preliminary attempt to point out the aspect of experienced reality for which the term is being made to stand. Compare the excellent remarks (of Professor Karl Pearson) on mass and force in Clifford’s *Common Sense of the Exact Sciences* pp. 269-71. The following sentences may serve as an example of the kind of vague language which is still too common even with accredited writers: “No genuine scientific endeavour is satisfied with mere description. In the stricter meaning of the word, science only begins when a knowledge of conditions and causes is joined with a knowledge of facts. The psychologist always keeps this aim steadily in sight. He too is never satisfied simply to know what the facts are, but ever strives to ascertain under what conditions and as due to what determining causes the facts occur” (G. T. Ladd, *Outlines of Descriptive Psychology*, p. 7). Apart from some definition (which is nowhere given, of the terms “explanation,” “description,” “fact,” “determining causes,” it seems impossible to conjecture exactly what the distinction here drawn meant to the writer or to set any limit to the confusions and vagaries it might suggest to the “beginners” to whom it is addressed.

something more than mere description would be justified if by description were meant any rough and ready account of a complicated natural process as it appears to the unscientific eye, it is absolutely false as against such description as we have been contemplating. The man who maintains that no description can ever amount to an explanation is mistaking the inevitable imperfections of our science for its highest ideal, and is logically bound to deny the existence of any distinction between hypothesis and fact. Every fact, we are sometimes told, is an hypothesis. This is of course true if by a "fact" one means merely the first incipient description of the processes of experienced reality. Such descriptions are necessarily superficial and defective, and may often also be of the merely "symbolic" type (*Eg* one may hear it stated that "it is a fact that volition *causes* movement," or that "every material particle *exerts an attractive force* upon all others") But if by fact we mean full and adequate description of experienced reality, the case is different. Adequate description, "pure" experience would be ultimately identical with fully-established "theory," not with mere "hypothesis." If all "facts" are concealed hypotheses, every hypothesis is an inadequate attempt to reach "fact" ¹

All knowledge, then, according to our view, is "empirical" in the sense of being concerned in the last resort with the description of matters of fact or experience. But not all the branches of study treat the experienced facts which it is their business to ascertain and describe in one and the same way. The attitude of each of the ordinary departmental sciences to the great body of experienced facts which make up the life of the world may be said to be characterised at once by more or less strict limitation of range of vision, and by the endeavour, within a limited range, to take account of all important or typical facts. Comparative narrowness of range and accompanying fulness of detail within that range, these are the distinctive marks of the sciences which are

¹ Thus it is not the knowledge aimed at by the physical sciences only but all knowledge which takes complete and adequate description as its ideal. From the idealist standpoint the defect of the "mechanical" theories of the physical world is not their supposed substitution of description for "explanation," but their failure to detect the inveterate "symbolism" of their descriptive apparatus. They confuse not "explanation" and description, but inadequate description of a single aspect of experience and adequate description of the whole.

called sometimes "natural," sometime "positive," sometimes "empirical," in each case with a certain conscious opposition to more "philosophical" or "metaphysical" or "speculative" forms of study. A well-defined and organised department of science has always more or less accurately drawn boundaries within which to look for the facts that form its peculiar subject-matter. Of whatever facts fall within these limits the science, if brought to completion, ought to afford a satisfactory account: whatever facts fall entirely without them may be treated, for the purpose of that particular science, as if they had no existence.

It does, of course, happen in the progress of science that sets of facts which at first appeared wholly disconnected, and were therefore originally treated separately, are found to cohere so closely together as to demand treatment in intimate connection with one another and by a common method. Whenever this happens we get a readjustment of intellectual boundary lines, by which what have hitherto been regarded as distinct branches of knowledge become henceforth one in subject and method. And on the other hand, bodies of fact which in the infancy of science, seemed so much alike as to form the province of a single scientific inquiry are found as our knowledge of the details of natural processes increases, to exhibit such a complexity and variety of typical forms as to furnish the materials for a plurality of more or less independent groups of investigations. It is by this double process of fusion and of fissure that the gradual evolution of organised knowledge has been and is being accomplished. But it is at least not easy to believe that the process of progressive organisation is capable of indefinite extension. It is, for instance very hard to imagine that the phenomena of chemical combination and the phenomena of the moral life should ever be brought in their fulness, within the bounds of a single branch of inquiry. In the present state of the sciences, at any rate, the facts of the mental life are as completely disregarded by most of the "physical" sciences as though they had no existence at all, while psychology in its turn is able to ignore the reality of all but a select few of the facts which constitute the whole of the physicist's world.

ceivably operate with the facts of experience on a different plan. Instead of taking a part of the facts of life and trying to get as much detailed insight into them as possible, we may conceivably sit down to study experience and experienced facts broadly as a whole, and to ask, without attending to special matters of detail whether we can detect any general characteristics which belong, not to this or that class of facts or to this or that aspect of experience, but to the facts of life or the contents of experience viewed as a whole. If any such most fundamental characteristics of the world of experience are to be discovered, we clearly have in them the materials for such a science as was called by Aristotle "Theology" or "First Philosophy," and by his editors 'Metaphysics'—a science, that is, which aims at enunciating results which shall be true of things not merely in so far as they have extension, or outline, or movement, or any other special quality by which some one subsidiary class of experienced facts is differentiated from others, but universally and without restriction of all experienced contents whatever (*ἐπιστήμη ὅντων ἢ ὅτιων*)¹

It need hardly be said that in admitting the conceivability of such a science we are in no way claiming the license to construct merely fanciful or speculative hypotheses about the constitution of things, in independence or in defiance of the revelations of ordinary experiment and observation. For after all we have nothing but our knowledge of the details of experience, whether gained in everyday life or by the stricter methods of the 'empirical' sciences, upon which to base our philosophic inquiries, and, as a matter of fact, our description of the science we are contemplating would be as applicable to the notions of such "unmetaphysical" thinkers as Avenarius and Herbert Spencer about the proper sphere and scope of philosophy as to those of Aristotle. Further reflection may well persuade us that a science like that of which we are in search is not only conceivable, but actually possible.² For we can see at once that, with all their infinite

¹ For a discussion of the points of difference between the Aristotelian philosophy of "Being" and such a philosophy of experience as is spoken of in the text, I may refer to my article on 'The Metaphysical Problem' in the *International Journal of Ethics* for April 1909.

² For the difference of meaning between the often confounded terms 'conceivable' and 'possible,' see Avenarius *Kritik der reinen Erfahrung*, i. 27.

diversity, the facts of life present at least one common characteristic. Whatever else they may be, the facts upon which all our sciences are founded are all what the German language, for once proving superior to our own, can describe by the convenient word *Erlebnisse*, things through which we have lived, bits of the experience of individual centres of thought and feeling. And since the ultimate aim of all the sciences is, as we have seen to give such an account of the facts of experience as shall be consistent with appearances and with itself, we may fairly say that all scientific progress consists in the more and more adequate rendering of experience, or in the freeing of our descriptions of experience from the "symbolic" elements which, as we have seen enter so largely into our scientific hypotheses.

Science, in fact, at its different levels is nothing more or less than experience in the process of becoming fully consistent with itself and free from all admixture of 'symbolical' or non-experiential hypothesis.¹ Scientific thinking would have reached its goal and done its work if it could succeed in taking into account the whole body of the experience of ourselves and of all sentient beings as a single system, and in giving a description of the contents of that system in which every term were itself under exactly specified conditions matter of direct experience. We are thus led by reflection on the nature of scientific progress to the conception of the scientific ideal as a perfect or completed or pure experience, an experience which embraces not some merely but all the events and processes which are the contents of the experience of ourselves and all other centres of thought and feeling, and beholds them as a single coherent and harmonious system, without any of the gaps, confusion, and contradictions inseparable from imperfect and 'symbolical' knowledge. Such an all-embracing and finally consistent experience would in every case see things as they really are. Theory for it would be one with direct experience.

And thus for it the ideals at which we are conscious of striving unconsciously among in all our theorizing would be brought into actual facts. Whether such a complete

¹ Cf. *Philosophy of Science*, p. 10.

experience, with the whole of reality for its object, actually exists is a question which need not and must not be raised at this stage of our argument but even if we suppose it to be nothing more than a mere "negative ideal" which actual knowledge is always approaching but never reaches, it is easy to see its enormous value. For it clearly affords us a standard or criterion by which to measure the degree of truth contained in the various conceptions of the general character of the world of reality with which we meet in the course of our ordinary everyday reflections on life and the world as well as in our more strictly scientific thinking and thus supplies us with a starting-point and a principle for our metaphysics.

As we have said already, though all thinking, scientific and otherwise, has for its subject-matter the facts of experience and for its aim the discovery of simple, adequate, and consistent ways of representing those facts yet none of our scientific or unscientific hypotheses about the world succeed in realising their ideal in more than an approximate degree. Our previous statements on this point have indeed been only partially accurate, in so far as our language about the "facts" upon which the sciences are based has sometimes apparently countenanced the notion that the "facts" are a given quantity which are there and can be accurately known before the work of 'thought' or reflection is begun, it is liable to a serious misconstruction, against which we must now protest. Our expressions, which have been chosen so as to insist in the strongest possible way that what is real means something which we do not *make* but *find*, or, at least, make in accordance with laws of construction which are not themselves of our own making, must now be modified by the further consideration that the "facts of life," in the sense in which they are identical with this reality which we do not make but find, mean not the "facts" as they are seen by the untutored eye of immediate and unreflecting perception, but the "facts" as they appear to the experience which has arrived at an all-embracing and coherent view of the whole system to which they belong. Though the truth about reality is, as we say, *found* and not made, it is not to be found without a preliminary process of search. Thus in any

knowledge for a system of metaphysics which shall be at one and the same time both constructive and critical. It is the function of metaphysics as a constructive science to discover and formulate those most general formal conditions of experience with which any description of matter of fact which can be accepted as ultimately true must, as we have seen, agree. as a critical discipline, the business of metaphysics is to test the various theories and propositions which pass for true in our everyday thinking or in our sciences by comparison with the ideal standard of a "pure" or perfect experience, and to decide how far all or any of them satisfy the two requirements of agreement with the formal conditions of experience in general and with the material conditions of the particular experiences which they claim to represent. Thus, on the constructive side, a science of metaphysics ought to provide us with at least a rudimentary and elementary conception of the general character which belongs to the world of experience as a whole, and, on the critical side, it ought to be of the utmost service in exhibiting the contradictions and imperfections of all attempts to apply to the world of experience as a whole categories which are only adequate to represent isolated aspects of it. In both its constructive and its critical aspect such a science consists throughout simply in the consistent application of the two elementary principles, that a description of experienced fact, to be fully true, must represent all the facts, and must represent them without contradiction.

From all this it is clear that neither metaphysics nor any other branch of knowledge can really give us that final and utterly adequate picture of experience which is sometimes spoken of under the name of "absolute" truth. The departmental or non-metaphysical sciences fail to do so because, as we have seen, they depend for their very existence upon a kind of systematic *suppressio veri*, they have necessarily to mutilate experience in order to deal with it, as they do, piecemeal. And further, every one of the departmental sciences indulges not only in the *suppressio veri*, but also in the *suggestio falsi* which usually accompanies suppressions of the truth. They not only do not give us the whole truth what truth they do give us comes to us largely mixed with

systematic experience of the world merely as systematic and as experience, apart from consideration of the special character of the details of the system. Its first principles are, (1) what is real is experience, and (2) what is real is not self-contradictory and it is in dependence on these principles that it attempts, in its critical aspect, to discuss the claims of the systems described by the several sciences to be identical with the complete world of experience. The very generality which metaphysics affects in itself prevents it from telling us in full *what* the real world is. Indeed it would be impossible to give a full answer to such a question without transcending the forms of universality and relational predication which are common to all sciences and all knowledge, but this imperfection does not in any way debar metaphysics from confronting the theories and hypotheses of the other sciences with the general characteristics of experience as a whole, and thus testing *their* claim to supply the missing knowledge. Its principal business may thus be said to be that of perpetually modifying the pretensions of every other form of thought by reminding it of the existence of aspects of experience of which it has taken no account, as well as by testing the inner coherency of its descriptions of facts which it does claim to consider. In this way the abstractness and incompleteness inherent in metaphysical knowledge itself need not prevent it from having a great deal to say upon such questions as whether, *e.g.*, "matter in motion" or "a kingdom of selves" are categories which furnish an adequate and coherent account of the general character of the whole system of experienced fact.

Such, as we conceive it, is the true function and scope of metaphysics. It is a science which, starting from the conception, involved in all our notions of scientific progress, of a complete and consistent formulation of experience, aims at discovering the general characteristics of such an account of experience, and at comparing the various pictures of the world given by the several sciences and by the unsystematic thinking of everyday life with this ideal. And as the futility of such investigations could only be proved by a counter-appeal to a metaphysical theory of first principles, we may fairly claim that the description of the aims and objects

of the science of itself affords sufficient justification for its existence¹

What then we now go on to ask, would be the distinguishing characteristics of a subordinate science based upon the results of such an inquiry into the formal conditions of experience as we have just described? The answer to this question is not very far to seek. It is clear in the first place that one of the chief advantages possessed by such a science would be that its sphere and subject-matter would be defined and circumscribed with exceptional exactness. We ought, in the case of such a science to be able to say with certainty and definiteness precisely *what* the lesser system of experienced fact contains and *how* it stands related to the wider and all-embracing system of experienced fact which constitutes the metaphysician's real world—where the lesser system begins and where it leaves off. Any uncertainty about the boundary lines of our science, any failure to define with complete and perfect accuracy the subject-matter of its investigations means that we cannot say with precision what is the reality which we are investigating or how far a completed experience of the whole of reality, the point of view of our science would be modified by the inclusion in one system of the aspects of existence contemplated by it and by the other departmental sciences. Before psychology, for instance, could become, as philosophers have often tried to make it, a branch of applied metaphysics, we should need to know with perfect precision how the individual human mind is related to the human body and to the whole of the universe. In the absence of information on this point, we can never be sure that even the most certain conclusions of the psychologist are not affected *to an unknown degree* with error, in consequence of that original isolation of certain aspects of reality from their concrete setting by which the science of psychology is created.

We may perhaps, in passing, call special attention to the words in the last sentence which we have italicised. The disadvantage under which the non-metaphysical sciences labour is not merely that of containing erroneous and one-

¹ I am glad to observe the close correspondence in general character between my own view of the problem of metaphysics and that taken by Dr. Hodgson in his recent *Metaphysic of Experience*.

sided statements, such as are inseparable from any science which takes less than the whole of reality for its province and subject-matter. They not only fall short of the full truth about things, but they fall short of the truth by an amount which we have no means of estimating with any accuracy. We can see that their views of the world and the processes it contains would have to undergo modification if the facts upon which they are based were brought into relation with all the rest of the, to us unknown, facts of which a complete experience would have to take cognisance, but we know neither the amount of the modification, nor, except in the very vaguest way its direction. For instance we may feel confident that the convenient working hypothesis of the "parallelism" between bodily and mental processes is a merely "symbolical" way of representing facts the full nature of which is necessarily unknown to us. We may confidently assert that the process which we are compelled to treat as having the double character of physical and psychical change would appear, from the point of view of an experience complete and "purer" than our own, as a single and indivisible event. But we in our limited experience are utterly without the categories which would be adequate to the representation of such a single concrete psycho-physical process and are in consequence driven to take refuge in the convenient but entirely unthinkable fiction of "parallel" processes, or a process with two sides to it, the relation between which remains, when all is said, an utter mystery. The unity of mental and bodily life thus is for our science a mere postulate and nothing more. The first step towards placing the science of psychology on a metaphysical basis, if such a thing were possible, would have to be the discovery of some category under which we could consistently represent this unity, which is for us at present expressed as a mere postulate, by hypotheses which we can all see to be merely "symbolic," and therefore, as they stand, untrue.¹

If an "empirical" science could be successfully turned into a branch of applied metaphysics, it would still of

¹ I venture to think that Dr Ward's trenchant assault on the doctrine of "parallelism" (*Nat and Ag* vol. II chap. II.), however fatal to its claims to afford final metaphysical truth, leaves the question of its practical value as a convenient working hypothesis untouched.

course be constantly necessary in the details of the subordinate science to disregard the great majority of the facts of experience, and thus to fall into convenient errors of abstraction, but it would always be in our power, whenever we thought fit, to correct our own misstatements and half-truths by the aid of our knowledge, as metaphysicians, of the modifications and alterations necessary to bring the facts of our science into relation with the rest of experience as a whole. We should, in fact, be much in the position of a mathematician allowing himself for convenience' sake to simplify a problem by the removal of certain complications which it is always in his power to restore the moment it seems desirable. In the actual state of psychology and the other sciences our position is rather that of an experimenter who suspects all his results to be vitiated by a certain constant error, but is entirely without the means of determining its quantity and direction. If we sometimes hesitate to admit the truth of the Platonic contention, that the results of our "empirical" sciences are after all "opinion," and not "knowledge," the disagreement is due not so much to the improvement of scientific method and the increase of scientific knowledge as to the comparative inadequacy of the ideal of "knowledge" with which we allow ourselves to be content¹

This leads me to a further consideration. In a science based upon the results of metaphysics we ought to be able not only to define our subject-matter with accuracy, but also to formulate the leading concepts which our science uses in the interpretation of phenomena in a way that precludes their containing any internal contradictions or any merely "symbolical" and non-experiential elements except such as are known to be such, and can be replaced by more "real" equivalents whenever we choose. For contradiction and incoherency in our scientific categories mean that any readjustment of our science to the larger whole of experienced fact would involve the extensive modification of its leading working ideas. And so again the presence in our explanations of imaginary and symbolic terms means that the hypotheses of our science are at best *mere* working ideas, con-

¹ But we must not forget that the discovery of the calculus of probabilities has made it possible for us, as it could not have been for Plato, so long as we are content to disregard the general limitations of empirical science, and to raise no questions about its ultimate assumptions, to determine the amount and direction of the probable error of our observations.

fessedly inadequate as representations of concrete and actual processes such as are or might be given in a real experience. And in a science based on metaphysical insight into the character of the real there can be no such things as merely "working" hypotheses or merely provisional explanations, except as mere incidental blemishes and excrescences. If we knew what the "flower in the crannied wall" was, says Tennyson, we should know what God and man is. And assuredly the converse proposition is equally true. If you know what God and man is, you ought to be able to say, without recourse to unthinkable symbolism, what the flower in the crannied wall is. The "dialectic" which would put us into full and complete possession of the truth about the constitution of the universe would also, as Plato pointed out, be the one science which could speak with unquestionable authority of the true nature of each particular thing, how insignificant soever (*Republic*, 534 B). Internal self-contradiction and disagreement with the general formal characteristics of experience would be alike impossible in a science based on metaphysics. If the concepts used by any science cannot without thorough-going modification stand the double test of self-consistency and agreement with the general characteristics of experience as a whole, then, however useful for practical purposes, the fundamental ideas and principles of that science are after all 'working' hypotheses, and have none of the finality which we have a right to expect from a science of metaphysical origin.

We may easily illustrate the argument of the last paragraph by an appeal, for instance, to the position, with respect to finality, of our ordinary geometry. Suppose that our insight into the general conditions of experience enabled us to make either of the following propositions. (1) Whatever is experienced must necessarily come to us with attributes of a spatial kind, the nature of which is correctly represented by the Euclidean assumptions about space,¹ or, (2) The spatial form, as represented by Euclidean geometry, will be found to belong to all experiences which satisfy certain definitely known conditions²—then the geometry of Euclid would assume the rank of a philosophical science, and we should be in a position to say,

¹ By the "Euclidean assumptions" I mean those implied in the famous postulate about parallel straight lines, or, what I suppose is the same thing, in 1.32

² e.g. all perceptions of sight and touch

given certain accurately known conditions, the propositions of geometry are necessarily and without exception true of the real world. And, if we could feel perfectly satisfied with Kant's treatment of space as a form of intuition in the "Transcendental Aesthetic," we might almost be prepared to take this view of the relation of "Euclidean" space to the general scheme of the world. Any misgivings that might arise about the matter could only be due to the feeling that the Kantian dictum that space is the form of intuition belonging to the "outer sense" is too vague and obscure to amount of itself to such a distinct apprehension of the conditions upon which the spatial type of experience depends as we seem to require from a metaphysic of geometry.

But now suppose for a moment that there is—I do not say truth—but even intelligibility in the contentions of our modern "metageometers." Suppose that Euclid's space, with its fundamental axiom about parallels, is only one of several thinkable types of spatial construction, and that we do not possess enough knowledge about the whole scheme of things to be able to say that Euclidean space alone is real, or even that the space in which we live is in all its parts of the strictly Euclidean type. I do not, of course, affirm that the suggestions here brought forward are true or even well-founded; the question of their value is entirely one for the mathematician and the physicist. The important point for my purpose is simply that such ideas, be they as valuable as Professor Karl Pearson suggests or as useless as Stallo asserts, have been put forward by eminent mathematicians, and that, right or wrong, they appear, as far as a mere layman can judge, to have enough meaning to be capable of being discussed.

Consider the argument of the following sentences (*Common Sense of the Exact Sciences*, p. 222) "We assume that all our space is perfectly *same*, or that solid figures do not change their shape in passing from one position in it to another . . . Supposing our observations to be correct, it by no means follows that because the portion of space of which we are cognisant is for all practical purposes *same*, that therefore *all* space is *same*. On the like basis with this postulate as to the sameness of our space stands the further assumption that it is homaloidal (i.e. that its curvature is zero). We may postulate that the po . . . space

of which we are cognisant is practically homaloidal, but we have clearly no right to dogmatically extend this postulate to *all* space." Now if we admit the very possibility of discussing these suggestions, we are at once bound to concede that the doctrine about parallels which expresses the fundamental assumption of our ordinary geometry as to the constitution of the space in which we live is so far from being an intellectual necessity for all creatures possessed of an "outer sense," that it is—in the words of the author from whom I have just quoted—"a mere dogmatic extension to the unknown of a postulate which may perhaps be true for the space upon which we can experiment." This means that the most fundamental assumptions of our science are true only with restrictions and under conditions which we have no means of determining with accuracy, and that we simply do not know how far or with what modifications they would hold good for a completed experience. And this liability to modification to an unknown extent is, as we have already seen, the distinguishing mark of a merely "empirical" and non-metaphysical science. And hence writers like Professor Clifford, who admit the possibility of non-Euclidean space, are only logical in calling geometry a "physical" science.¹

We may now pass from these generalities to the application of the principles which have guided us so far to the problem in which we are specially interested, the problem of the relation of ethics to metaphysics. We may state the alternative possibilities between which we have to choose in the most general way in the form of an antithesis, thus. If we can begin a study of the phenomena of conduct by such a definition of the concept "conduct" as will serve, not for provisional purposes merely, but with completeness and finality, to indicate where moral action begins and where it merges in something

¹ To the various possibilities about space enumerated in *Collier's Sermon on the Last Things*, *loc. cit.*, we may add another which the physicist has a right to disregard, though it ought to be taken into consideration by the metaphysician. Mr. Bradley, I believe, is the only writer who has clearly stated the point that, for all we know, there may be numerous spatial systems within the Universe having no kind of spatial relation with one another. If this is so, even a proof that the curvature of our space in all its parts is zero would not warrant a dogmatic denial of the existence of non-human intelligences endowed with spatial experiences of a different kind. For these geometers space with a finite curvature might be *real* space, and "flat" space with a zero curvature "imaginary." The assertion that even our own spatial experiences all form one single spatial system needs more examination than it has hitherto received.

higher, if we can produce a thoroughly coherent account of moral good and moral duty, if we can trace back all the varied phenomena of the moral life and the moral judgment to their source in a single self-consistent principle of action, if we can exhibit exactly the place the moral ideal and the moral way of looking at things would hold in an experience which took into account the whole contents of the world, and show how it would fuse into a harmonious whole with the apparently discordant ideals of science and of art, then we have a system of ethics based upon a genuine metaphysical knowledge of the ultimate character of reality as a whole. If we cannot do this, but are driven, in our attempts at systematising our moral judgments and preferences, to operate with concepts of a self-contradictory and merely "symbolic" kind, if our practical conclusions hold good only within limits and under restrictions which cannot be accurately assigned, if we cannot establish a finally consistent account of the ideals which we set before ourselves in our conduct and our ethical theory, then ethics is, like any physical branch of inquiry, a merely "empirical" or "natural" science, if indeed it can properly be called a science at all.

We may state the same antithesis in a more concrete form thus. If we can start in our theorising, from what Kant would call a purely "formal" conception of good or of duty, deducible from the mere general analysis of the notion of rational or self-determining activity, and from this concept deduce in turn laws of conduct applicable without restriction to all rational or self-determining agents as such, irrespective of the special peculiarities of their physical environment and animal nature, we can base ethics upon metaphysics, as Kant and his followers attempt to do. But if we are driven to begin our ethical reflections with a concept of good or duty based upon a comparative study of the empirically ascertained facts of human life and history, and if, for aught we know, this provisional concept of good or duty may be liable to be modified in the course of our researches by the discovery of new and pertinent social facts, if we have to recognise in these "facts" "material" circumstances not springing from the very nature of self-determining or rational personality as such, but from what are in the end purely animal impulses and instincts, of which we

do not know but that they may be otherwise in other parts of the universe, if our moral laws again would be liable to indefinite modification under different physical conditions and with altered animal instincts then once more (this) is a purely empirical study, and its concepts and hypotheses, like those of all the so-called "empirical" sciences, are merely provisional, that is, they are only valid under conditions the totality of which is unknown. They are valid and binding for a self-determining personality possessed by the particular animal organisation and placed in the particular physical and social environment with which we are ourselves familiar, but it is impossible for us to say to what extent they would be applicable to the case of non-human personalities in some remote part of the universe or even to future generations of human personalities, if the material conditions of existence upon our planet were to be seriously altered.

A final decision between these opposing views of the basis of ethical truth and its degree of validity can only be obtained by the full review of the considerations which we intend to urge in the following chapters, but we may, I think, at even this preliminary stage of our argument, with advantage point out the singular fragility of the assumptions to which the Kantian view (and a metaphysical theory of ethics means practically the Kantian view) stands committed. (1) If we are willing to go back to first principles, we may make our appeal to the character of the highest and most universal categories under which we can bring the facts of organic and psychical life in their totality. Avenarius, in his essay on "Philosophy as a Conception of the World in conformity with the Principle of least Action," and others¹ have very properly emphasised the value for philosophy of the so-called principle of economy. According to their view, the fundamental nature of human thought is best expressed by the statement that thinking is a labour-saving contrivance, by the aid of which we are able to classify our experiences at the cost of the least possible expenditure of energy. The same formula applies no less admirably to the whole body of our ethical feelings and judgments. The whole system of ethical sentiments and

¹ For a brief and lucid statement of the principle see also H. Cornelius, *Psychologie als Erfahrungswissenschaft*, pp. 85-87.

judgments by which the moral life of a community or a civilisation is ruled has, in fact, no other significance than this, it is a contrivance, primarily shaped like other contrivances of the kind, in consequence of the competition for survival between divergent types for bringing the particular reactions of an individual upon the stimuli supplied by his material and social environment into conformity with the permanent interests of the species to which he belongs, and of himself as a representative of his species and an instrument in its propagation. The supreme importance to the human race at large of a general ethical progress is due to the fact that the formation of moral habits and the sentiments to which they give birth promotes the regular execution, at a trifling cost in energy, of a beneficial reaction, which, apart from the moral habit, would only have been brought about sporadically after an infinity of less beneficial or even positively harmful reactions, and at the cost to the individual and the species of an untold expenditure of energy¹

In another connection it would be interesting to dwell more in detail upon the unique advantages of the conception of moral action here suggested as affording at one and the same time an estimate of the functions discharged by morality in the life of the civilised man or community, and an indication of the nature of the evolutionary process by which moral institutions and ideals have presumably been called into existence. For the present, however, our purpose is simply to show from such a description of the general character of moral action the utter inadequacy of any theory which professes to

¹ Lest the reader should think me unmindful of my own previous protest against loose and ambiguous use of the term "energy," I hasten to remark that the energy of which I am speaking may be understood throughout in a purely physiological sense as energy of muscular exertion, and is therefore strictly "calculable in terms of mass and velocity." It is possible that I may by an oversight be found using such terms as "energy" and "force" inexactly here and there in the course of this essay, but I do not think that any of my arguments will be found to turn upon the ambiguous use of these terms. Thus if by any chance I should be found referring in the course of my exposition to "psychical forces," I would ask the reader to understand by the phrase merely *processes* of a psychical kind, and to dismiss from his mind any notions of "activity" which the words may suggest. For an elaborate statement of the parallel between the evolution of organic types and the development of ethical and social systems, I may refer the reader to Professor Alexander's *Moral Order and Progress*. For an interesting illustration of the way in which ethical sentiments can be originated by natural selection, see Westermarck's able discussion of the origin of the universal condemnation of incestuous unions — *History of Human Marriage*, chap. xiv.

find a sufficient explanation of ethical facts in the bare concept of a "rational" or "self-determining" intelligence. To say that morality has its origin in the rational or self-determining character of human activity is indeed to say no more than that it is, in our own phraseology, a systematic device for saving labour to the human organism. For activity is self-determining just in so far as the agent's reactions against his environment cease to be determined for him from the outset by a few rigidly fixed typical forms of instinctive response to certain general classes of stimulus, and come to be adapted on each and every occasion to secure the particular result which, under the special circumstances of the case, is demanded by the permanent interests of the individual or of the species of which he is a representative member. I am, for instance, more truly a self-determining agent than a hemisphereless fish, because while the fish is so constituted that he cannot but snap at the bait that is dangled before his nose, even though he has but this moment been released from the hook that lies concealed behind it, I can put down the glass that I am raising to my lips and consider the probable effect of the indulgence upon my health, my work, and my reputation.

Again, when we speak of "rationality" as characteristic of the highest forms of psychical life, what we have in view is just this same thorough-going adaptation of the organism's ways of reacting upon its environment to the permanent interests of individual or species. When we contrast man as the possessor of a "capability and godlike reason" and 'large discourse looking before and after' with the "beast that wants discourse of reason," the choice of the contrasted epithets shows that the "capability" we have in mind is just this same power, in virtue of memories of the past and anticipations of the future, to find the appropriate, as distinguished from the merely customary, the precisely, as distinguished from the merely vaguely appropriate, reaction. The reason which manifests itself in specifically human action is not, like the *voûs* of Aristotle, something mysterious that comes into the organism from without and manipulates it as a musician does his instrument, it is but another name for the thorough-going organisation of the organic reactions themselves in accord with

the principle of securing the beneficial course of behaviour with the least expenditure of energy

If this is so, we can see at once why it is an insufficient explanation of the nature and origin of our moral ideals to say that they spring from the rational character of human agency. For "rationality" by itself is a mere empty form, and to say that moral action is rational action is tantamount to saying merely that it is action organised in accordance with the principle of economy¹ But in order to know what kind of conduct will in the case of any individual or species conform to our principle by securing the beneficial reaction at the least cost, it is clearly all-important to know what are the general conditions of existence which have to be met by the action of the individual or species in question Any serious difference in the initial conditions under which individual or species grows up is bound to make a correspondingly great difference in the type of action which, as conforming most nearly with the principle of economy, will establish itself in the end as the "rational" type of behaviour for that individual or species

This means to say that any really fruitful inquiry after an ethical ideal or ethical principles must be based not merely on an analysis of the formal characteristics of moral action, but upon an examination of the actual circumstances of the material and social environment of the human race, or, in other words, that ethics must study man not merely as an intelligence, but as an animal dwelling on the surface of a particular planet under certain definite physical surroundings, and inheriting certain peculiar instincts, and as a member of a species having certain special ways of obtaining nourishment and of reproducing his kind. And it further means that all attempts to create a universal system of ethical principles, applicable not only to mankind but to all intelligent and self-determining agents, must be mere waste of time For, if we once suppose the general physical basis of animal life to be seriously altered, it is impossible to say to what extent the types of sentiment and action which, under present conditions, approve themselves as life-preserving and beneficial to the individual and the species would be still in place

¹ Just as "rational" thinking means thinking in the way which enables us to co-ordinate our experiences most economically, i.e. by the fewest and simplest hypotheses

We have only to imagine a race of intelligent beings who could support themselves, like Shelley's "bright cannibals," on air and dew, or whose methods of reproduction were asexual, to realise how completely the nature of the ethical ideal is conditioned by the concrete empirical facts of human history and the original data of animal appetite and instinct with which our race started on its development¹. Thus a consideration of the general character of rational activity seems to warrant the conclusion that ethics, unless it is to consist of mere barren tautologies, must be based not on general principles of metaphysics, but upon the study of human nature in its concrete empirical entirety, as it reveals itself to the student of psychology, sociology, and anthropology. Only from such an empirical study of human nature, as it actually is, can we deduce such a knowledge of human needs and aspirations as will enable us to give a definite answer to the questions, what type of life is the ideal and along what lines is progress to be made towards its realisation.

(2) We might have reached the same conclusion, even apart from the appeal to the principle of economy, by direct reflection upon the simple maxim, the practical validity of which we all acknowledge in our moral judgments upon men and actions, that "circumstances alter cases." To a large extent the truth of this proverbial statement is admitted even by those among us who are most anxious to base their ethics on the general notion of self-determining agency. Kant indeed stands almost alone among modern moralists—the only striking example of a similar attitude which occurs to me at this moment is that of Geulinx—in his refusal to allow any modification of ordinary rules of duty to meet exceptional cases. For the most part our opponents would be prepared to concede to us so much as this, that though it is always incumbent on you to do your duty, there are no hard and fast rules to show what your duty is, on that point you must be instructed by circumstances. For instance, in a time of anarchy or civil war or in a state of siege the ordinary rules of not taking the law into your own hands or of giving every accused person full opportunities for an impartial

¹ Or, without indulging in such fantastic imaginations, we may call to mind the curious influence of the material environment of a tribe in leading to such customs as polyandry and close intermarriage. Westermarck, *History of Human Marriage*, chaps. ix-xvii.

and public trial may have to curtsy to the necessities of the situation, and what would, under ordinary circumstances, be outrageous violence or even murder may become a moral duty dictated by self-preservation or by patriotism

But the maxim that "circumstances alter cases" seems to me to contain more than is recognised by such admissions as these I cannot but believe that the general feeling of men of intelligence and character would bear me out in saying that among the circumstances which alter cases are not only such external circumstances as those mentioned in the last sentence, but also the subjective tastes, likings, interests of the agent himself. To a Kantian, of course, the suggestion that my individual tastes and feelings may be among the circumstances which exercise a modifying influence on my duty will seem rank heresy, yet there are cases of conscience in which it seems impossible to reach a decision apart from such considerations of the purely subjective circumstances of the tastes, feelings, and interests of the individual who is called on to act

Take, for example, a case that, if historians speak the truth, has more than once occurred in real life, the case of Isabella in *Measure for Measure*. The question is, What would be the path of duty for a woman who was compelled to choose between losing her own chastity and sacrificing her brother's life? To such a question, as far as I can see, there can be no one universal answer, if one were consulted by a person placed in such a quandary the most one could say by way of advice would be "You must judge for yourself which is most worth having, chastity or a brother. If you feel that to buy the life even of a brother at such a cost would be a degradation, then of course you must refuse to accept the terms offered you, if you feel that complaisance, in such a cause, would leave no degradation behind it, I at least cannot condemn you if you consent." Most women of high character and sensitive conscience would probably make Isabella's choice, but I cannot think that any really thoughtful man would be very confident in condemning one who had chosen the other alternative. It seems to be altogether a problem for the agent herself to decide, and to decide by reference to her own personal feelings. What might in one woman be an act of heroic self-sacrifice might in another be a cowardly desertion of duty. It is

altogether a question of the amount of degradation which a particular person would feel to be involved in compliance. To Isabella it seemed self-evident that our own code is of more worth to us than our brother, to Funtine in *Le Maître à deux*, on the other hand her child's well-being seemed of more importance than her own innocence, and which of us is prepared off-hand to say that either was wrong? Probably none of us would say that Isabella ought to have yielded to Angelo, and surely none of us would say that Funtine was called upon to let her baby starve.¹

These are, of course, extreme cases, but something like the same conditions arise in all those cases where a public man is tempted to resort to quibbling, prolixation, or double-dealing from patriotic motives. Here again it seems impossible to answer the question, Is it ever right to deceive *pro bono publico*? without some reference to the personal feelings of the public man. Some men would feel that the falsehood, however necessary in the public interest, left on them an ineffaceable stain of personal pollution; to others it would appear to be selfish neglect of duty to sacrifice the interests of their country to their own personal dislike of lying. And here again it seems impossible to say without qualification that either party would be right. If a man feels a lie to be such a violation of the moral order that he can in no case utter it without degradation, no doubt he ought not to tell the convenient lie, and perhaps one may add he would be wise not to aspire to a prominent position in political life, but on the other hand, if a second man feels that the interests of the country for which he acts are paramount, who is to say that he is wrong in serving those interests even at the cost of having sometimes to say that which is not?

I am not, of course, appealing to cases of this kind, in order to argue that a man is always justified in doing what, at the moment, he happens to like. It is not of mere momentary likes and dislikes, but of fixed and settled tastes and interests,

¹ Shakespeare seems to have felt that it is difficult to decide the moral problem unconditionally. At least he has taken care to strengthen our sympathy with Isabella by representing Claudio as a coward who stoops to negotiate his sister's purchase his life on Angelo's terms. One feels that in any case such a brother as Claudio was not worth the sacrifice, but I am not sure what our judgment would be if he had not known of the proposal or known it only to reject it.

that I am speaking, and my contention is that it is the duty of a man who desires to inform his moral judgment to make a serious study, not only of the probable consequences of his actions to himself and others, but of his own interests and feelings. It is a part, though not the whole of morality, to know what it is that would satisfy you, and when you know what it is to see that you get it. And with difference in tastes and feelings goes difference in the acts and objects from which satisfaction may be derived. The only satisfactory rule for a man who wishes to act at once reasonably and conscientiously would be to take into account in making his decisions both the external circumstances and what he knows of his own tastes and disposition, and at the same time to pass his judgment on the evidence submitted with impartiality, *i.e.* just as if the tastes and likings which form a part of the facts to be considered were those of some neighbour whom he was called on to advise. The common precept, to put aside all questions of one's personal tastes in forming a conscientious judgment on the morality of a given course of action, is but a perverted form of this important rule of impartiality.

I have gone at some length into this question of the legitimate influence of the purely personal factor upon our moral judgments, because, as it seems to me, these considerations are of themselves enough to show that the selves or personalities of which a science of ethics has to take account are not the mere abstractions of idealist metaphysics, but fully concrete animal beings existing in a special environment and with special physiological and psychological peculiarities, all of which must exercise an incalculable influence upon the theory of conduct, though they are necessarily disregarded by a metaphysic which is bound to confine itself to a mere general study of the formal characteristics of experience. I may perhaps be allowed, before I leave the subject, to refer in passing to another set of ethical problems which seem to me to support the same contention even more forcibly. On what ground, I would ask, can a system of ethics which is based on the mere general concept of self-determining agency justify the exceptional severity with which the best moral judgment of all civilised communities has reprobated various forms of sexual perversity? It seems useless to appeal to the Kantian maxim of treating

humanity in the persons of others, always as an end and never as a means, by way of explanation. For it is clear, *eg* from the history of Greek civilisation, that both parties to such a perverse relationship may make it an instrument of their own intellectual and even moral development as free personalities (cf Plato, *Phaedrus*, 256 C-1). Yet the ordinary moral judgment of civilised humanity would seem to regard even the most ideal relationship which can be developed upon a basis of perversity as infinitely more reprehensible than the least elevated relationships of the normal type. Kant's acquiescence in the judgment of ordinary morality on this point (see *Works*, vii 76, ed. Hartenstein) is easier to understand than to justify on his own principles.

The fact is that any serious discussion of sexual ethics, which aims at explaining the principles involved in our ordinary judgments of these matters, is bound to take into account the part played by reproduction and the impulses connected with it in the life of the species considered as one among other organic types, as well as in the mental development of the individual. Once more we find ourselves forced to the conclusion that no treatment of ethical problems can be adequate which is not based upon full recognition of the special peculiarities of our "phenomenal" or animal nature. Metaphysical ethics seem in the end to be summed up in the empty tautology, "Ethical conduct is doing what, under given conditions, is reasonable for *you*", but if you want to know what the "reasonable" for you is, you have to take into consideration not only the fact that you are an intelligence, or a self-determining personality, but also the fact that your original impulses and instincts are such and such, and your physical and social environment such and such. In a word, you are thrown back upon a previous study of psychology and sociology—to say nothing of biology—and a wide examination of the concrete peculiarities of the particular society of which you are a member. Kant and Green, to mention no other names, have said many excellent things about, *eg*, sexual morality, but they have been obliged in their treatment of the topic to take into consideration a great deal more of the concrete facts of human life than is implied in the conception of man as a self-determining personality.

And it is permissible to suggest that any future study of ethical principles will have to go much further in the same direction. Philosophical analysis has investigated the general ethical concepts of self-determination, freedom, obedience to law, etc., so thoroughly that there seems to be little room left in this field for anything more than occasional criticism of formulæ. What is really wanted, if the study of ethics is to advance any further, is not fresh threshing of the old straw, but a serious and systematic investigation of the concrete facts about the ethical convictions of different communities and different classes within a single community. We should, for instance, be much better able to understand the ethical ideals and principles of our own civilisation if half the industry and acuteness which is all but thrown away on superfluous restatements of philosophical generalities could be devoted to the task of ascertaining what is the actual tone of opinion in the great professions upon the ethical problems which arise in the discharge of professional duties. For instance, what is the standard of truthfulness recognised in the clerical, or again in the legal and medical professions? What are the views of these professions about the obligations of professional loyalty? What is honesty, as actually understood by the great body of "honourable" business men? What are the ideals of diplomatic morality which may be found in the despatches in our blue-books? What are the current ideas of honourable conduct in sexual matters which are characteristic of the various classes of society, or of dwellers in towns and dwellers in the country? On what grounds will an average jury recommend a murderer to mercy? Such are, as it seems to me, the questions which it is most imperative upon us to answer if our ethical science is to give us a genuine insight into the character of the ideals of conduct which are really operative in human life, and the history of their development.¹

If the line of argument which we have pursued so far is valid, it follows, then, that it is a complete mistake to found a system of ethics upon the results of a previous study of general metaphysics. Ethics has appeared to us as a study

¹ The late Professor Sidgwick's two essays on clerical morality in his recently published *Practical Ethics* were a step in the right direction. But he was principally concerned with deciding what *ought* to be the professional standards of morality. What I desiderate is some knowledge of what they *are*.

which has to deal with a subordinate section of the facts of experience, and to deal with them in all possible fulness of detail. That is as much as to say that ethics is, from our point of view, an empirical or natural study as much as physiology or psychology. But it does not follow from this that metaphysical philosophy and ethics have nothing to do with each other, or that there is no such thing as a "Metaphysic of Ethics." I may conclude this chapter by briefly indicating what I believe to be the real nature of the relation between the two branches of study. Ethics, like any other science, affords material for both the critical and the constructive work of the metaphysician. For it has, of course, like other sciences, its own special categories and its own peculiar way of looking at the facts of the world, and we naturally want to know whether these ethical concepts give us the truth about things pure and unmixed, or whether they contain contradictions which would have to be removed before our account of experience would satisfy the conditions which as metaphysicians we demand of a completely truthful account. We want to know, for instance, whether it would be ultimately consistent with all the facts of experience to regard the world as an ethical system of self-determining personalities or spirits, or whether there are facts of experience neglected by ethics but studied by other sciences which refuse to be harmonised with such a conception of the ultimate reality. Again, we want to know whether the concepts of the ethical ideal and of moral progress which we use in ethics are themselves really intelligible and self-consistent, or contain merely "symbolical" and self-contradictory elements. Thus it is the duty of the metaphysician as a critic to bring the ethical concepts and the ethical way of representing the facts of the world to the test by comparing them with the metaphysical ideal of a complete and "pure" experience, and so to decide whether they are an adequate representation of the general character of the whole facts, or an imperfect and provisional way of representing a part of the facts in abstraction from the rest.

For constructive metaphysics ethics is again of the highest importance, as furnishing the details about one very striking side of the experience, the general characteristics of which the metaphysician seeks to determine. It is manifest that the

general character of a reality in which our ethical experiences, our struggles and aspirations and ideals, form an aspect must be very different from that of a reality from which all these experiences were absent, and which, so far as we could tell, contained nothing but such aspects of fact as are taken into account by the physical sciences. Like all sciences which deal with special aspects of reality, ethics does in an imperfect way tell us something about reality as a whole. Even if it is impossible for us to say positively what place human aspirations hold in the scheme of things, or how they would be represented in an experience which had the whole scheme for its contents, we can at least pronounce with safety that no theory of the ultimate character of the world can be adequate which ignores their existence and attempts to apply to the whole concrete reality of the universe categories derived solely from a consideration of that aspect of experience which is dealt with in abstraction by the physical sciences. Whatever may be the real nature of the "Absolute," the necessity of finding room within it for the facts of ethics and religion should make it abundantly clear that it is not completely expressed by such merely physical categories as "mass," "velocity," and "acceleration." There is, therefore, from our point of view, plenty of good and useful work to be done by a "Metaphysic of Ethics." Our complaint against the metaphysical moralists is simply this, that they invert the real order of dependence between the two branches of inquiry, and make the "Metaphysic of Ethics" the beginning, instead of the end, of an examination of morals.

CHAPTER II

SOME ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF A METAPHYSICAL ETHIC CONSIDERED

Illud in his rebus nequaquam cernere possis,
Democriti quod sancta viri sententia ponit

LECTURE

Our last chapter will already have given the reader a general idea of the line of argument which we intend to pursue in the course of this essay. The chapters which are to follow the present will prove to be little more than the development in detail of the contentions of our last paragraph. But before we proceed to this more elaborate examination of the concrete facts of the moral life, we shall do well to devote a few pages to the consideration, and if possible the refutation, of some of the more common and plausible arguments which have been adduced to show that ethics, unlike the "natural" sciences, cannot be intelligently studied except in dependence upon a previously established system of metaphysical first principles. We must not disguise from ourselves the fact that in recent years much of the best philosophical opinion, in England at least, has been ranged on the side of the doctrine against which the polemic of the last few pages was directed, and in particular that the philosopher who has done more than any English writer since Butler to create an interest in the study of the ethical life has in the earlier chapters of his *Prolegomena to Ethics* offered something like a formal proof of the impossibility of a "natural," that is, a non-metaphysical, theory of morals. So long, then, as we have not examined, and, to the best of our ability, met some of the principal arguments by which the position of our opponents is

supported, the reader may be excused if he cherishes a suspicion that the contentions of our opening chapter, however plausible they may sound, must be after all either inconclusive or irrelevant. If Professor Green and other writers on ethics have really succeeded in showing the necessary dependence of ethics upon metaphysics, all that we have said hitherto is likely to produce no more conviction than the scholastic arguments against the possibility of motion leave upon an auditor conscious of his own ability to walk away from the sophist's lecture-room.

Thus we are driven in spite of ourselves to postpone the more constructive part of our inquiry yet a little longer, and to embark once more upon a chapter of philosophical polemics. The task is an ungracious and an irksome one to write no less than to read, but in sheer self-defence it must be taken if we do not wish to be put to silence by an appeal of the *apriori* more kind. Philosophical inquiry is still, unfortunately, too much like backwoods exploration in the 'her' you a hunter has to clear a way for you through the stately groves of a primitive forest before you can use it for squaring the log for your own little cabin. Well for us if the log-hut of narrow decking does not prove less weather-proof as well as less imposing than the congeries of giant-grooves among which we propose to make our clearing. We will take, then, as typical arguments of the kind we wish to meet (1) the contention common to moralists of very different schools that virtue is essentially differentiated from all forms of expediency by the sole fact that it teaches us what *ought* to be, not what *is* and (2) that is really a specially elaborated form of this same general contention—the argument of the Kantian moralist as set forth, with special reference to English

ment of facts, it will now be generally admitted, we need no *a priori* axioms of unquestioned validity, no concepts whose non-empirical origin place them beyond criticism. So long as our scientific concepts and hypotheses enable us to group the facts of nature in a way which is at once consistent with the present state of our knowledge and helpful towards the discovery of fresh facts, their relative validity is for the time guaranteed by their usefulness, and we need not scruple to employ them or to assert their relative truth because of the probability that the fresh facts which they enable us to discover will eventually lead to modifications in them.

But with ethics, according to a wide-spread conviction, the case is radically different, because the scientific problem is different. Ethics, it is said, is a "normative" science, a science not of facts but of ideals. It tells us not what *is*, but what *ought* to be, and, in an ideal society, *would* be. And you cannot learn what ought to be by observation of or experiment upon the empirical course of events in a morally defective world like our own, where what ought to be is most commonly just what does *not* exist. A "naturalistic" or "empirical" theory of conduct—so it is maintained—would at best teach us what men have done or are likely to do, not what they ought to do. Ethics, then, in virtue of its "normative" character, contains some non-empirical element of immediate intuition or a *priori* axiom of unquestionable authority and more than transitory or provisional validity. And for this very reason its precepts, unlike the conclusions of the sciences of facts, are absolute and final, and beyond all danger of modification by metaphysical criticism. They are valid not for this or that person or in this or that situation, but, as the ecclesiastical catchword has it, *semper, ubique, omnibus*. We can afford to be content with an imperfect and provisional account of what *is*, and to rest in the hope that its imperfections will be lessened by the researches of our children and children's children, but how should we reconcile ourselves to a merely tentative and provisional account of the good we desire to seek and the duty we ought to discharge? Here, if anywhere, we must demand unerring insight and finality of statement. If fiction should prove to be mingled with truth in our attempts at a final theory of moral principles, on what, then, can we rely as truth by which to

live? If the foundations be dissolved, what are the righteous to do?

The full consideration of the line of thought thus suggested cannot be undertaken in a preliminary chapter like the present. We shall at a later stage of our argument be able to say better than we can now what is the peculiar character of moral obligation, and how far it is correct to regard ethics as primarily a science of obligations. At present we will deal not with specifically moral obligation, but with the general concept of obligation in the widest sense, and we will ask the double question (1) What is meant by the opposition of what ought to be to what is? (2) Is this opposition peculiar to ethics?

The answer to one question at once furnishes an answer to the other. In itself the distinction between what ought to be and what is is not confined to the sphere of moral science, as may easily be seen by an appeal to the current language of unprejudiced thought. Logic also, we are often told by our pupils, in contradistinction to psychology, deals with the ways in which we "ought" to reason, not the ways in which we too often do actually reason. The science of æsthetics has much to say as to the way in which certain perceived contents "ought" to affect the emotional side of our nature. Take arithmetic again, you may often hear the school-boy say, "I know this sum "ought" to come out, but I can't get it to do so." So again the medical man may say, "There ought to be altered light-reflexes," or knee-jerks or heaven knows what, "along with the symptoms of this patient, but hitherto I have failed to find them."

Thus, in a sense, we may say all science, in so far as it is real science, is concerned with what ought to be. All science, that is, aims at setting up types of uniformities with which our experience of facts should conform so far as it realises the conditions of a "pure" experience, *i.e.* comprehensiveness and consistency within the limits prescribed by the initial assumptions of the science in question. If, within these limits, we find our experience of particular processes failing to conform with these pre-established types or scientific laws, we are thrown back on one of two suppositions. Either the experiences embodied in our typical generalisations were not themselves "pure" experiences, or the apparently contradictory facts have

not been correctly described; either in the supposed "law" or in the supposed exception there must be an omission of relevant or an insertion of irrelevant circumstances which would have to be remedied before our account could become a really adequate account of experienced reality in terms which should be themselves possible contents of experience. Wherever this discrepancy occurs between our own accounts of our experience and the conditions of a "pure" and consistent experience, so far as we know them or assume them, we have what is, in principle, the familiar divergence between what is and what *ought to be*. If we do not always behave as we ought, or as the ideally virtuous man would, neither do we always reason as we ought, or as the ideal sage would, nor yet do we always approve that painting, poem, or melody which we ought, or which the man of perfect taste would. In this respect ethics does not differ essentially from logic or aesthetics, nor these again from the other sciences. If ethics tells us how we ought to act, and aesthetics what we ought to admire, and logic how we ought to reason, histology, for instance, tells us what we ought to see under the microscope. The only distinction that we can draw between sciences of facts and sciences of norms seems to be one of degree. There are three sciences which may perhaps claim more of the "normative" character than the rest, just because their range is wider and their "norms" therefore of more general applicability. As opposed to other sciences of a more restricted scope, logic, ethics, and aesthetics may fairly claim to cover between them the whole range of the three great divisions of intellectual activity, the speculative, the practical, the creative. And thus each may fairly claim to tell us what results we ought to get under conditions so general as to be *comparatively* unhypothetical. The "norms" of logic are for this reason more universal than those of mathematics, those of ethics than those of economics. As between these three peculiarly "normative" sciences themselves, however, the highest place in respect of "normative" character must be assigned, not to ethics, but to logic. For the norms of ethics can only be applied after all to a small portion of the experienced facts of the world's history. To the inanimate world they have no application at all, to the animate but non-human world only a doubtful application, and

even in the world of human feeling and action there are whole aspects which seem independent of them. There would be no sense in asking whether our current ethical predicates can be asserted of the 'behaviour of a cyclone', it would be easier to ask than to answer the question how far any of them can be predicated of the conduct of a black beetle or an angel; and even within the limits of distinctively human intelligence it is by no means clear that they can characterise in more than a very superficial way the activity of the artist and the student. The norms of logic, on the other hand, are applicable to any and every system of experience-contents just in so far as it is a system at all, in other words, to the whole universe of reality considered as an ordered whole, or to any subordinate set of aspects within that whole which cohere closely enough together to be treated for any theoretical or practical purposes as a single connected system. There are many sides of existence that may be treated for all practical purposes as independent of the laws of morality, there are none which are independent of the law of contradiction. If there is any science which, from its authoritative and normative character, is incapable of being founded upon empirical observation and analysis of what *is*, logic is that science, and conversely, if it is possible by an examination of the reasoning processes as they are actually employed in daily life and in the various branches of science, or by an inquiry into the character and amount of evidence which is actually treated by the various sciences, as well as in affairs of everyday life, as equivalent to proof, to create a scientific logic, in other words a general theory of the conditions of valid inference and the ideal of scientific demonstration, much more should it be possible by the ordinary methods of scientific inquiry into facts, *i.e.* in this case by an examination of the various moral ideals and institutions which have actually flourished in civilised human communities, to create a scientific ethical theory of the general nature of moral action and the general conditions of moral progress. The success of the inductive logician is the best guarantee for the success of the inductive moralist.

These considerations lead at once to a second point of the highest importance. If all sciences, in some sense or another, deal with what ought to be, no science can say what *ought to be*.

except in dependence on a previous investigation into what is. It is not only in ethics that it holds good to say that a "categorical obligation" is a contradiction in terms. What ought to be, in all departments of inquiry, means what is demanded in order to make our accounts of experience consistent with what is assumed to be known of its general formal characteristics. If we want to know how we "ought" to make our inferences, either in general or in any special branch of science, we must first learn what are the systematic conditions under which our inferences have to be made. If we wish to know how much evidence or what kind of evidence amounts to proof in a given science, we must first of all begin by ascertaining what are the leading peculiarities of the subject-matter which we have to observe or upon which we propose to experiment. If we would know how we ought to handle a certain subject, as sculptors, say, or as musicians, we must make a study of the physical properties of the various materials in which the statue may be executed, or the peculiar scales of the instruments upon which the overture or symphony is to be performed. The way in which an idea ought to be carried out in marble and the way in which it ought to be carried out in metal will not be exactly identical, and the orchestration of a composition will need to be different according as it is intended for performance by a band largely composed of brass instruments or for one in which the brass instruments are few and the "wood-wind" and "strings" predominant. So if we would know what in the narrower ethical sense we ought to do, to know what we ought to do—even Kant cannot escape from this necessity—we must begin by knowing *what we are*, what is the general character of the system of nature in which human activities play a part, and what are the general conditions under which that part has to be played.

Further, if we are asking not merely for a vague general description of human well-being in the abstract, but for a more definite and particular account of the path of happiness or the path of duty for our individual selves, we shall need to know, as conditions of the problem to be solved, the general character of the special civilisation of which we form a part, of the social institutions of which we can avail ourselves, and the social prejudices with which we may be brought into

conflict There is, in short, no single element, whether in the general physical environment of the human species or of some sub-variety of it, or in the special social environment of a particular individual or body of individuals, the neglect of which may not vitiate our inferences as to duty or happiness. In principle we cannot refuse our assent to Plato's conviction that, *ceteris paribus*, the man whose scientific training has taught him most about the constitution of the world-system and man's place in it will also be of all men the best fitted to say what is good for men and therefore the best fitted to rule For us too the "dialectic" art in its final perfection must be identical with the art of kingship When the Philippian jailor—to take a familiar example—cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas naturally replied with a recital of the cardinal *facts* of the divine economy—"They spoke to him the word of the Lord" To attempt the discovery of what we ought to do apart from a previous study of the actual facts of our position is like trying to solve a chess-problem without knowing the moves of the pieces or the laws of the game.

Thus it is no base counsel of expediency that says "no unconditional obligations" The doctrine of the formal or categorical imperative, carried out to its logical issue, could only lead to one of two alternatives, both disastrous Either it must issue in that glorification of purposeless drudgery which certain among us have baptized the "Gospel of Work," or it must leave us in an antinomianism in which all and sundry caprices of the individual, unembarrassed by any serious attempt to understand the necessities and responsibilities of his position, would reign supreme It is hardly necessary for me to remind the reader that experience is constantly showing how scientific discoveries and hypotheses, such as the Darwinian theory of natural selection, which seem at first sight to be concerned entirely with the facts of our racial history, and not in the least with our moral obligations, exercise as a matter of fact the most far-reaching and revolutionising influence on our conceptions of duty The researches of Darwin were one and all concerned not with what ought to be, but with what *is*, yet we may fairly ask whether there is a single moral question of any magnitude which intelligent and educated men would answer to-day in precisely the same fashion as they would

have done before the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*

Perhaps I may be allowed a still more striking illustration. The central doctrines of the Christian religion are obviously statements on alleged matters of fact, assertion as to what is. Whether or not the second person of the Trinity came down from heaven and took flesh in the womb of the Virgin, whether or not there is a life after death and a judgment to come in which our doom will be decided by our attitude to the doctrines and rites of the Church—all these and similar questions have to do not with what ought to be, but with what is, yet it is surely manifest that our conceptions as to what we ought to do must be vastly different according as we accept or reject the teachings of current orthodoxy about these matters of fact. Fasting communion, for instance, which to the unbeliever is no more than a somewhat puerile ceremonial observance, may reasonably be regarded by the believer in certain versions of these alleged matters of fact as a very solemn duty, which it would be the height of folly and criminality to neglect. Or, to take a more palpable case of extreme divergence of view, what, to the man who rejects Catholic orthodoxy, can be less justifiable than the rule which is—I believe—recommended by some casuists of the Roman Church, that in cases of difficult and dangerous child-birth, the life of the mother should always be sacrificed if need be for the chance of securing the life of the child? Yet what, on the other hand, more reasonable, if the Catholic theory of life be a true one, than that the baptized Christian, whose hopes of salvation are at least an appreciable quantity, should be suffered to die in preference to the unbaptized infant, of whose chances in the world to come nothing is known? In a case like this it is clear that what may to one man appear little better than murder, may, with equally good *prima facie* reason, appear to another a plain and inevitable duty, and the only sure way of deciding between the two opposing views as to what ought to be done by the physician or the midwife is to begin by first deciding between the two opposing theories as to the value and efficacy of the sacraments. The cruel practical dilemma just indicated cannot possibly be met by an appeal to primitive moral intuitions or to abstract and formal maxims of right conduct. The only way in which

the problem can be solved is by an inquiry based upon our empirical scientific knowledge of the system of the universe, into the actual facts of our position as human beings. Similarly, if such a theory of existence as is professed by Victor Hugo's Torquemada were a true account of what *is*, it would clearly be a moral duty to burn heretics. These remarks may serve to illustrate the close interdependence of the two questions, What are the facts about the world? and, What ought I to do? Of the peculiar features of moral, as distinct from all other obligations, we shall speak later.

We may turn, however, to less general considerations. In the writings of Professor Green and his followers, who may perhaps be still called the dominant school of moralists in this country, the force of such arguments as we have just brought forward is so far recognised that the theory of moral action is allowed to rest upon an analysis of our position in the universe so far at any rate as this, their ethics depend nominally upon the metaphysical analysis by which the existence of an "eternal self" as the subject of rights and duties is established. Green holds, moreover, (a) that, apart from this metaphysical analysis, no theory of moral obligation is possible, and he consequently systematically depreciates the value of the ethical writings of such men as Shaftesbury and Butler, who set themselves to fight the battle of a disinterested social morality without this particular metaphysical weapon, (b) that upon this analysis, without any further basis in psychology, a satisfactory theory of ethics can be erected. On both these positions, as we find ourselves compelled to dissent from both, it will be necessary to make some criticisms. I trust it is hardly necessary to say that any such criticisms as I may proceed to make have reference exclusively to the peculiar metaphysical basis of Professor Green's ethical theory, and in no way affect the truly extraordinary value of the brilliant picture given in the two latter books of the *Prolegomena* of the concrete characteristics and the growth of the moral ideals of Christian civilisation. It would indeed, as I conceive, be a real service to the memory of a good man and illustrious moral philosopher, to dis sever the admirable account of moral ideals and progress which constitutes Green's real contribution to ethics from the singularly fragile metaphysical

assumption and the frequently unsound psychological polemic against Hedonism by which it is encumbered both in his own writings and to various degrees in those of many of his best-known followers. I shall be successful in at least one of the objects of this essay if the course of our discussion shows that it is possible to accept such an account as Green's of moral ideals and progress, at any rate in its main outlines, without believing in the metaphysics of the "eternal self" or in the crudities of an extreme anti-Hedonist psychology.

To proceed with our examination. As to (a) Green makes it a reproach against evolutionary theories of ethics that (p. 9) "it has generally been expected of a moralist that he should explain not only how men do act, but how they should act," whereas, according to him, "it is obvious that to a being who is simply a result of natural forces, an injunction to conform to their laws is unmeaning," etc. This, however "obvious," seems very inconclusive reasoning. However we suppose man to have come by his aspirations, towards a state better than that in which he finds himself, the fact remains that he has such aspirations, and that the most "empirical" and least metaphysical account of the actual condition of human nature is bound to take cognisance of their existence. It is surely not inconsistent with the evolutionist's belief that these aspirations have grown from a simpler, and as we say an "animal" beginning, to say, if, as from my observation of human nature I am led to assume, you have such and such ideals and aspirations, then such and such a line of conduct will lead to the realisation of your aims, such and such another line will not. So, of course, again with the various forms of logical inference. Is there any reason why an evolutionary anthropologist, simply because he believes the human mind, and along with it its logical forms and categories, to be a development from more rudimentary beginnings, should in consistency discard the "preceptive" parts of logic? And if the recognition that human intelligence is an instrument which has been gradually fashioned in the course of evolution from beast-like origins does not forbid the logician to tell us how we ought to reason and what evidence ought to win our assent if we would be true to our ideals of explanation, why should a similar recognition that our ethical ideals have a

history going back to a prehuman ancestry prevent the evolutionary moralist from telling us how we ought to act if we wish to realise those ideals in practice? The primary question for ethics is after all not how we came by our ideals, but what they are

But, you say, the nature of those ideals, as we find them indicated in the ethical theorising and moral practice of cultivated communities, shows that they cannot have had an animal origin. For the purpose of argument we may for the moment agree to let this assertion pass unchallenged. Yet the fact still remains that metaphysical moral theories begin at the wrong end. Your contention may amply justify the creation of a metaphysic of ethics, but such a metaphysic ought not to precede but to follow upon a detailed and unbiassed investigation into the concrete character of the ideals operative in civilised society, just as *Naturphilosophie* and epistemology follow upon the inquiries of the physical sciences. If the character of human ideals, as revealed in the moral practice and the moral judgments of individuals and societies, is such as to compel us to admit the presence in man of a principle which is not a product of "natural forces," the fact is of the highest importance for metaphysical and psychological theory, but why should it preclude a perfectly independent and impartial investigation of the various ethical ideals themselves? It is, no doubt, a striking fact that we habitually form judgments of worth, but why should it be indispensably necessary to prefix a theory of the metaphysical implications of worth to the attempt to discover what the things are to which mankind have at various times attributed worth?

So again with Green's favourite argument from the existence of moral progress or the desire for it¹. Progress, he argues, means passing from an initial state to a better state, and you can only judge one state better than another by comparing both with an ideal best. Hence all conscious moral progress is possible only on the condition that the person making the advance has from the very first been determined to action by the more or less shadowy concept of the possible best. And, though this is not explicitly stated, for a similar reason it would follow that any attempt on the

¹ Cf. *Proleg. to Ethics*, p. 180

with one another, and that in more or less definitely assignable departments. What the student of morals has to go upon in his inquiry into moral ideals and moral progress is not a previously existing theory of the ultimate good, but a mass of empirical judgments embodying the ethical convictions of society at large as to the directions in which progress is being made. Such judgments are, for instance, the statements that modern civilisation, as compared with ancient, shows an advance in its conceptions of the rights and duties of women or that the English society of the nineteenth century is morally in advance of that of a hundred years ago, in virtue of its greater sobriety or its keener sense of the responsibilities of the wealthy. It is only by an examination of judgments like these, which convey the actual ethical sentiments of a given society, that it is possible to discover what are the general characteristics of actual ethical advance.

There are, of course, cases in which the moral philosopher is bound to condemn what appears to society around him an advance in morality as a retrograde step. What seemed to the public advance in humanity may to the keener insight of the student stand revealed as mere sentimentalism. What was acclaimed by the public as increase in delicacy and modesty may have to be gibbeted as mere growth in prudish insincerity. Yet in the end the only material we possess from which to frame a theory of moral progress is the general body of popular convictions about moral progress, and all that moral philosophy can legitimately do for us is to analyse these judgments and lay bare any identical principles which can be detected in them, rejecting as illusory those popular judgments which, when examined, run counter to these general principles. Self-consistency is, with popular judgments on ethical matters, as we have found it to be elsewhere, the only final test of truth.

As for a complete theory of the "best" or ultimate moral ideal, it is not until we have gained by the method just described considerable insight into the nature of such moral progress as is actually felt by each succeeding age to exist in the world that we are in a position to think of raising the question, What would be the characteristics of a society in which the various developments which existing ethical sentiment accepts as progressive had reached their goal? and even

when we have raised the question we must still wait, as I have already said, for metaphysical criticism to show whether such a perfect society can be thought of without contradiction. It will be the aim of later chapters of this essay to show that there is a radical and incurable doubleness of character about the moral ideal which makes it incapable of final realisation in any "best" condition, whether of individual or of society. The conscious duplicity of the hypocrite we shall find to be but the natural exaggeration of the unconscious duplicity which resides in the very heart of morality. Not to anticipate our future discussions, however, we may content ourselves for the present with reiterating our contention, for which we think the preceding sentences have afforded sufficient justification, that the study as well as the practice of ethics begins with the recognition of an "empirical" better, not with the creation of a metaphysical "best." To admit this contention is indeed to surrender unconditionally the whole argument against the possibility of a purely "empirical" theory of morals. If this point has been proved to the satisfaction of the reader, then in principle we may fairly claim to have won on the whole case. Still, rather than be under the imputation of leaving any part of the contrary argument unanswered as far as our very moderate ability goes, we will crave the reader's indulgence for a few further considerations upon the reasoning of the opening pages of the *Prolegomena to Ethics*.

In order to emphasise as strongly as possible our sense of the mischief which is done to ethics by making it dependent upon a peculiar metaphysical theory, we will state in the plainest language at our command two propositions which we think will be inevitably forced upon us by an examination of some of Green's metaphysical assumptions. These two propositions are (1) There is no such thing as the Eternal Self, in Green's sense of the term, (2) If there were such a thing as the Eternal Self, it would be of no value for the purposes of the student of ethics. I now proceed to give my reasons for advancing these rather sweeping assertions.

(1) *There is no such thing as the Eternal Self*. In saying this I do not mean to contend that the arguments of chapter 1 of the *Prolegomena to Ethics* prove nothing at all. Something they do prove, and we may in the course of our argument see

what that something is, but they do not prove what Professor Green sets out to prove, and subsequently assumes that he has proved. What Green intended to prove was, of course, that the individual consciousness of each of us, on one side at least, is something which is not a result of "natural forces," has not had a beginning in time nor in history, and consequently cannot be adequately described by the methods of "natural" or "empirical" science. Now it must be noted that from the very first Green states the problem in a way which however conclusive against the crude materialism of the physicists who sometimes dogmatise about psychology without sufficient training in the science to understand the psychological point of view, is distinctly inapplicable to a genuine psychological empiricism. In his introductory account of the empirical position in psychology and ethics, he appears to make the following untenable assumptions: (1) there is no alternative between basing ethics upon metaphysics and attempting to base a theory of human conduct on loose general observation of the facts of animal life at large. (2) and these facts, so he apparently assumes, are physical, or, in other words, can ultimately be adequately expressed in terms of mass, velocity, and acceleration, so that the empiricist's position becomes one of attempting to trace psychical facts back to physical causes.¹ But neither of these assumptions seems necessary to the empirical position. As to (1), why may we not, while availing ourselves of such illustrations and analogies as we can safely draw from the infra-human world, base our ethics in the main on the observed facts of specifically *human* life? Ethics would then be indebted to natural history only in the same way in which scientific psychology is not infrequently indebted to animal psychology for hints confirming its independently obtained results.

The difficulty, in Green's mind, appears to be this, that if human and animal mental life are continuous, and human ethical sentiments have arisen by a continuous evolution from infra-human beginnings, as the evolutionary empiricist assumes, the sense of obligation must be explained as arising out of

- The wording here is mine, but it is clearly what is in Green's mind, as is shown by the emphasis laid on the "physical" nature of the empiricist's facts throughout this part of the *Proleg.* I carefully avoid introducing the terms "matter" and "motion," for reasons which seem too obvious to need explanation.

mere experiences of pain and pleasure. The consequence, however, scarcely seems to follow so necessarily as Green supposes. Among the higher animals, at least, it seems more reasonable to hold that animal experience, in proportion as it approaches our own, is made up of more than *mere* pleasures and pains. Are not the rudiments of the sentiments of approbation and disapprobation to be found among the higher animals, especially where the conditions of life are such that the animal can make its sentiments take effect upon its fellows?¹ If so, the course of mental evolution would after all not be one of mere growth in knowledge about the conditions of pleasure and pain. And if it should be said that the experiences of the lowest forms of animal life at any rate cannot contain much more than pleasures and pains, the retort lies ready to hand that the vague organic experiences which we may roughly call the pleasures and pains of the *Infusoria* are not the pleasures and pains the psychologist is contemplating when he denies that the sense of obligation can be a derivative from pleasure-pain experiences. These vague organic experiences are at least as closely akin on their sensational or cognitive side to our more differentiated perceptions as they are on their affective or emotional side to such pleasures and pains as are under discussion in the controversy about Hedonism. They are at once more and less than these Hedonic experiences—less inasmuch as they lack the conscious reference to self involved in an enjoyment pursued as such, more inasmuch as they contain a cognitive as well as an affective element. To affirm that the sense of obligation may possibly have been derived from such beginnings as these is not therefore equivalent to deriving it from the selfish calculation of future pleasures and pains, and the derivation need not be regarded as *prima facie* impossible by any one, except those who are prepared to maintain that the feeling of obligation is demonstrably primitive and absolutely underived.

¹ The question will hardly be answered in the negative with any confidence by those who have seen a cat punish her kitten for uncleanness. The following account of chastisement as inflicted by a savage father shows us an expression of disapprobation which affords an exact parallel to the boxing of a kitten's ears. "I shall not pass over in silence the correction a father gave one of his children for having thrown a stone at the back of another younger than himself, it was merely a light slap upon the shoulder, which made him shed tears, and prevented him doing so again" (La Billardière, quoted in H. Ling Roth, *The Tasmanians*, p. 127).

(2) Even if we granted Green's contention about the supposed necessity of basing an empirical system of ethics on the facts of animal as opposed to specifically human life, it would not follow, as he seems to assume, that those facts must be regarded as ultimately physical, *i.e.* capable of being adequately expressed in terms of mass, velocity, and acceleration alone. For there are clearly three alternative possibilities before us. Either (*a*) the facts of life may be capable of adequate representation by purely *physical* hypotheses, or (*b*) our physical formulae might turn out on closer examination to be mere symbols for what can only be represented adequately in terms of a *psychical* character, or (*c*) we may need for the adequate representation of the facts both physical and psychical hypotheses—the full reality being of a two-sided *psycho-physical* kind.

Now the arguments by which Green satisfies himself of the existence of an Eternal Self and the inadequacy of empirical ethics have their full force only when brought against the first of these three ways of conceiving the facts with which natural history and empirical psychology have to deal. It is a defect which neutralises the effect of his whole argument for the reality of the supra-sensuous self that it rests throughout upon the assumption that the *origins* of the self, supposing it to have had a beginning, must be conceived of as a series of purely physical events. A self which is a resultant of any process of development must, he assumes, be the result of a merely physical process. Yet it is clear that we may grant him that the self cannot be the result of a purely physical development without for a moment granting that the *self* is in his sense "eternal," uncreate, or not a thing of evolution. In other words, what Green succeeds in proving is simply that the part played in the universe by consciousness is not that of a secondary resultant called into being by the play of physical forces, what he has set out to prove, but has not proved, is that *my* consciousness or *yours* is, on one side of it, not the result of any development at all. His argument may perhaps be thrown into the form of a syllogism, thus: Subject and object are relative terms which mutually imply one another, and cannot exist independently of each other, matter and motion and the physical world are objects, *ergo*

matter is not subject, and conversely the subject which knows, desires, etc., is not matter. From this result, which we have no desire to impugn,¹ he goes straight to the further conclusion that each and every self or subject, not being a secondary product of physical forces, cannot have come into being, and cannot have a natural history.

All that has really been proved, however, is that, if the self has a natural history, that history is one that cannot be given in physical terms. It has fairly been shown that consciousness is as primary and indispensable a datum for our scientific theories as extension or motion, and that the latter have no existence except in relation to some consciousness which perceives them, it has not been shown that that particular consciousness which I call my *self* is without beginning or history in time. For anything that the argument just cited proves to the contrary, my self may perfectly well be a created thing or secondary product, only if so the "forces" of which it is the product must be of a psychical or at any rate psycho-physical kind, the conditions of its formation cannot be adequately or properly stated in the terms employed by the purely physical sciences, but it does not follow that they cannot be ascertained and the history of the formation of the self written by the empirical psychologist. The refutation of the empiricist is so far only valid against one who is a materialist as well as an empiricist, against the Spinozist psychologist it has no cogency whatsoever.

It is as well to understand quite clearly the nature of the point which has yet to be proved before those who, like ourselves, "maintain" a position of psychological empiricism can feel ourselves refuted by Green's argument. We agree with him in regarding consciousness in general, or rather empirical moments of consciousness, as the primary fact of which any scientific theory must take account, and in rejecting the notion that physical objects have any being except as the contents of actual or possible experience. But we require, before we can admit Green's contentions, to have it proved that the existence of that finite centre of consciousness which I call my *self* is a

¹ Yet we must not forget that it may be convenient for certain purposes to treat the psychical side of things as the function of a physical organism. And so far as this treatment is convenient it is legitimate. Only it is always a half-truth.

primary fact also, and not to be explained by any more ultimate psychological facts. Unless in some sense or other not only consciousness in general but finite selves are ultimate undervived realities, there seems to be no meaning in speaking about the "Eternal Self." The eternity of consciousness in some form or other, is no more identical with the "eternity" of my self than the "eternity of matter" with the eternity of the table at which I write these lines.¹

What evidence, then, does Green supply which might lead us to affirm the undervived character not merely of consciousness, but of the "self"? As far as I comprehend his reasonings, all the evidence for this important transition is afforded by the consideration that a series of related events cannot possibly become aware of itself as a related series.² Hence, it is urged, the subject which is aware of the series must be itself something which is no member of the series, and therefore, more universally, a self which apprehends the contents of its own experience as a related series of events in time must itself stand altogether outside the time-series, and thus be "eternal." This reasoning, though it seems to have found considerable acceptance, does not appear to me to be either

¹ There is, of course, a sense in which anything and everything may be called eternal. You may say to an all inclusive consciousness every time would be the present, and so every successive stage in the world's history abiding and eternal. Or again you may say that everything is eternal when considered solely with respect to its quality and out of relation to its duration. But such "eternity" will not serve as a *differentia* for anything in particular (the mind of the oyster is in this sense as much "eternal" as the mind of the philosopher—see Green's own admission, *Works*, II, 159). And besides, the "eternity" which can be thought of as excluding origination by evolution is something very different from a subjective contemplation of objects *sub quadam specie eternitatis*. If you understand by the human mind's "eternity," as Spinoza does, and as Green sometimes appears to do, simply its power of contemplating itself as in some way a part of or "organic to" the Divine intelligence, then there is nothing in the "eternity" of the human mind which excludes its origination by evolution. Of a mind eternal in this sense we may well say what Plato (*Timaeus*, 31B) says of the whole sensible world *ἡγεμονία ἐστὶ τοῦ καὶ ἑὶς ἑσθαι*.

² This position itself needs more qualification than Green gives it before it can be accepted as psychologically true. See an important article by Dr G. F. Stout on "Perception of Change and Duration" in *Mind* for January 1900, where Green's assumption that "in order to be aware of B as succeeding A we must have both A and B before consciousness at once" is subjected to a searching criticism. I hope it is not impertinent to say that such observations as I have been able to make upon myself fully bear out Dr Stout's conclusion, that in such a case A need not as such be present at all when B is. The instance of the apprehension of a musical phrase, which is not perceived as a whole until the last note is heard, i.e. when the previous notes are no longer before consciousness (see *loc cit* p. 5) seems to me crucial. Like Dr Stout and the authors he cites, I completely fail in such a case to detect "memory images" of the vanished notes. But of course an opponent may say that this is due to defective observation.

clear or conclusive, and, at the cost of a little delay in my argument, I should like to point out some of the fallacies and ambiguities which appear to lurk behind the words of a seemingly obvious proposition "No one and no number of a series of related events can be the consciousness of the series as related Nor can any product of the series be so either" (*Proleg. to Ethics*, p 20, *ad fin*) "For this reason an intelligent experience, or experience as the source of knowledge, can neither be constituted by events of which it is the experience, nor be a product of them" (*ib* p. 21). These sentences clearly contain two statements with the truth of which we, at least, cannot quarrel. If the general philosophical views advocated in the first chapter of this essay are in principle sound, it must at once follow that the "self" to which the contents of all my adult experience, in so far as they are attended to at all, are related as "its" experiences cannot possibly be identified with any one in the series of experiences, nor yet with the mere succession of experiences considered simply as a succession of atomic psychical events. The fate of Hume's brilliant investigations into the nature of personal identity remains as a standing warning against the mistake of identifying the unifying principle in our experiences with one of its own objects. And further, we too are prepared to admit without reserve that the "self" to which all articulately expressed experiences are referred cannot have come into being as the result of a series of changes which *ex hypothesi* preceded the existence of all consciousness, and were therefore relative to no consciousness at all, in no sense contents of experience.

But Green's language, as quoted a few lines back, is intended to convey along with these two propositions two others which are by no means identical with them. He jumps from the admission that the experiencing self cannot be identified with any one or any succession of its own states to the assertion that it stands outside the temporal series altogether, and from the admission that it cannot have arisen as the product of a series of purely physical events to the conclusion that it has no origin in time at all. On both these points we find ourselves obliged to part company with him and with the Hegelian school of psychologists in general. For all that has really been proved about the relation of the knowing

self to the time-series is that it is not one or any of the presentations which succeed one another in the course of our experience; in fact, that the centre of our personal identity is, relatively to the changing presentations which make up the series of our perceptions and thoughts, permanent in time, not that it is "eternal" or independent of duration

What is required in order that the successive presentations A, B, C may all be recognised as experiences of the one soul or self d , is not that d itself shall stand in some mysterious way outside the time series, but simply that alongside of the transition A, B, C there shall remain elements in the experience of d which are the same at the moment when C is being experienced as when A was being experienced. This state of things may be expressed symbolically thus. Let d stand for the central unity of the psychical life of a single finite centre of consciousness. A, B, C for successive events in the way of actual sensation. a, b, c for the special modifications attending the experience of each successive event in virtue of the transition from the last event, whether we suppose those modifications to be memory-images, associations, or simply "psychical dispositions," etc. Also let X_1, X_2, X_3 stand for the remaining masses of sensational, ideational, and emotional elements which are present in consciousness along with A, B, C respectively. Then the successive cross-sections which could be taken across the consciousness of d during the transition from A to C will be roughly symbolised by AX_1
 aBX_2 . . . $abCX_3$. The sufficient and necessary condition of the apprehension, explicit or implicit, by d of these successive states as states of the single self is that X_1, X_2, X_3 shall contain some common element of sensation, ideation, or feeling which remains unchanged while sensation A gives place to sensations B and C. If this condition be fulfilled, it is in no way necessary to d 's recognition of the unity of its own inner life that the element common to X_1, X_2, X_3 should persist *throughout* the whole of d 's experiences unchanged. What is needed for the growth of the conscious mental unity that we call conscious selfhood is not the absolute permanency of any element in mental life, but simply such relative permanency as is secured by the presence in all psychical life of a body of sensational and emotional "psychical

fringes," which change at a much less rapid rate than the sensations and ideas which from time to time occupy the "centre" of consciousness.¹

Such a body of relatively permanent psychical contents we have in the "organic" sensations and the habitual emotional tone by which they are characterised, as well as in the habits which we have inherited or acquired in the earliest period of our mental life. None of these can indeed be said to be, strictly speaking, permanent and unchanging. The organic sensations to which I am accustomed to-day must undoubtedly be very different from those which were usual with me as an infant, as well as from those to which I shall become accustomed if I live to old age. Could a man of thirty suddenly experience those organic sensations which at eighty will stand to him for excellent bodily health, he would in all probability think himself either mad or seriously ill. And there is a similar difference between the psychical contents connected with the habits proper to different periods of life. Probably, then, there is no one psychical content, be it organic sensation or feeling-tone, which really remains permanently the same from the beginning to the end of life. But as compared with the rapid succession of special sensations and of ideas and the emotions connected with them, the changes in organic sensation and its feeling-tone conditioned by the growth of the organism are brought about by imperceptible degrees, and may therefore within the limits of a single well-marked period of organic development be regarded as practically non-existent.²

Here then, in the empirically ascertained fact that the organic sensations and the accompanying feeling-tone are relatively stable within long periods of life, we have all that is necessary for the growth of a distinction between the

¹ In fact, the eternal self-identity of my "Ego" or "real self" may very well be, not the ultimate presupposition of nature and knowledge, but an inevitable psychological illusion which it is the business of psychological science to dispel. Or again, we might say with Spinoza that there are many different degrees of such "eternity" as is possible to the human mind, and might go on to maintain that your mind only becomes "eternal" in so far as you make it so by setting your affections "on things above."

² Even complexes of perception belonging to the special senses, if constantly presented without material modification, may play an important part in making up the "self." It would probably go some way to unsettle my consciousness of self if my first glance at the looking glass some morning should show me a face markedly changed in colour or expression from that to which I am accustomed as "mine," or even a beard where no beard ought to be.

permanent self and its incessantly changing sensations and ideas. Absolute self-identity, indeed, from the cradle to the grave, is not guaranteed by the relative permanence of these elements of our experience, but absolute self-identity, when closely examined, proves to be hardly intelligible. Self-identity is, in fact, altogether a matter of degree. I am in a much truer sense the self-same person who wrote the first chapter of this essay than I am the self-same being who was born nine and twenty years ago in a certain English village, the identity in the first place is so complete that it seems at first sight a matter of immediate experience rather than of inference, there is a qualitative sameness of organic sensations, of psychic "fringes" made up of sensations of sight, touch, etc, derived from the surroundings amid which I am writing, of sensations and emotions connected with the performance of habitual actions (e.g. from the lighting and smoking of my pipe). With the baby in the cradle, on the other hand, I have hardly any points of psychical identity; organic sensations, sensational elements derived from habitual environment, from habitual actions, emotions, all are utterly different. If I were called upon to specify any single characteristic common to the baby and my present self, I should probably have to fall back upon such relatively insignificant, and in any case non-psychical peculiarities as a general resemblance in cast of features and possibly the possession of a mole or two. And I need hardly remind the reader of the important part that changes in organic sensation, brought about by cerebral or other disease, play in effecting the altered sense of personality which is a common feature of cases of insanity, not yet of the more transient psychical changes of the same kind so ordinarily connected with the great modifications of organic sensation which occur at such physical crises as puberty and "change of life".¹

We may fairly conclude, then, not only that in the relatively stable sensation and emotion masses of which organic sensation is the core, we have a sufficient basis for the distinction between the self and its experiences, but further,

¹ It is notorious that these organic crises are the periods at which that sense of domination by a strange individuality which is called now "inspiration" and now "possession" most commonly and most readily occurs. Compare also the part played by prolonged fasting, etc., in the lives of "prophets" of every age and every race.

that any metaphysical theory which, like that of the "Eternal Self," attempts to attribute to the inmost core of selfhood an *absolutely* unchanging character, is in open conflict with patent psychological facts. The centre of identity, which we can discover in our own inner life, is to begin with not "timeless," but only relatively *permanent in time*, and further, it is not absolutely but only relatively unchanging. There is no characteristic of the mental life whatever which really remains the same without modification from birth to death. If we seriously ask ourselves, supposing the "Eternal Self" to represent a psychological fact of any kind, what fact does it stand for? there can be, at least as it seems to the present writer, only one answer to the question. The "Eternal Self" of Green is in the strict sense no "self" at all, it stands outside all our struggles, all our interests, all our hopes, in a word, it is the mere logical abstraction of the relation between subject and object, and its "eternity" can mean no more than that the distinction between subject and object is a fundamental and primary characteristic of human consciousness. Now, even supposing this doctrine to be true, there is something of the charity which gives a stone where bread has been asked for about a proceeding which promises to prove to me the "eternity" of my best and highest self, and then fobs me off with a demonstration that the subject-object relation is an ultimate psychological fact. For with all respect to the subject-object relation, I must decline to regard it as in any way identical with the self whose victories are my triumphs and defeats my shame. Whatever else my "self" may be, it is at least something incommunicably mine and not another's: no one else can know exactly the same thrill of rapture over its successes nor the same glow of shame over its failures. But the subject-object relation is no more peculiarly mine than another's, it was my father's before me and will be my son's after me, like Iago's imaginary purse, "'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands." As Mr Bradley has said about the spiritual monads of a kindred moral philosophy, such a self, supposing it to exist, is a man's self just about as much as his "stai."

And really, when one comes to look into it, this hypostatized abstraction seems to have as little right to the epithet

"eternal" as to the name "self" As we have already seen, it is one of Green's initial assumptions that the subject-object relation is a primary form of all specifically human experiences, and as such has no history behind it This assumption, however, seems, to say the least of it, open to serious question All the evidence offered in favour of it by Green consists in the reflection that the existence of an object presupposes the existence of the subject for whom it is an object, and that consequently it is self-contradictory to regard the knowing subject as the result of processes which have no meaning except as objects for a subject Now so far as it goes this reflection is correct enough, but it does not go so far as might appear at first sight To begin with, it is clear that the argument only proves that my subject-consciousness cannot be the product of processes which stood out of all relation to a subject, it emphatically does not prove that my subject-consciousness may not be the result of processes known by some one else's subject-consciousness—for instance, my father's or mother's The moment I realise that the events which I call my begetting and birth, as they would be described in any work on physiology, consist partly of descriptions of processes which were actual factors in the experience of my parents, partly of "symbolic" accounts of other processes, as I have reason to believe they would have appeared under more or less definitely formulable conditions of observation, it becomes manifest that the relativity of object to subject in no way precludes the possibility of *my* subject-object consciousness having had a beginning and a history which it is the business of genetic psychology, helped out at need by embryology and physiology, to write

But we may go further than this, and impugn the central position of Green's psychology What is relative is not "subjects" nor "objects," but merely their subjectivity and objectivity As Riehl expresses it, "*Relativ sind nicht die Objecte (and we may add, nicht die Subjecte) sondern ihr Object-sein*" In other words, we seem justified in denying that the subject-object relation is a primary and indispensable form of human experience If we will reflect upon all that can be ascertained about the psychical life of the human embryo and the human infant in the days and weeks immedi-

ately after birth, we shall assuredly see reason to believe that there was a stage in our own experience when we had not yet learned to interpret our sensations as referring to "objects" Indeed, I will hazard the suggestion that states of experience in which the subject-object category is for the time being in abeyance are by no means unknown even in our adult mental life. Who is there, for instance, who does not know what it is to be so absorbed in the immediate sensuous enjoyment of the sights and smells of a meadow on a warm summer's day, or in the strains of a piece of orchestral music, as for the moment to lose all consciousness of himself as in any way being anything more than a succession of lights and scents and sounds, or of these as in any way objects other than himself? It is, of course, impossible to describe such a selfless condition in the relational language which we have at our disposal, but I feel sure that there will be few indeed among my readers who have not had some experience of the moods to which I am referring. And, apart from the occasional moments of reverie in which for the instant it is given to our poor distracted humanity to realise something of the harmony and peace of the direct vision of an animal or a god, the degrees to which the subject-object category adequately describes our ordinary experiences are infinitely various. Our perceptions of sight and touch, for instance, appear to us all much more objective than our perceptions of hearing and smell, and these again more objective than our organic sensations. Most people would probably refuse to call the sensation of hunger an "object," and would hesitate about applying the term to the smell of a rose or the note of a violin, while, on the other hand, the plain man very properly refuses to be convinced by all the misplaced ingenuity of physicist intruders upon the sphere of psychology that his perceptions of colour are anything but "objective." A review of the facts, such as we have no space to enter upon here, would probably show that the most important factors in producing the conviction that a given perception is "objective" are (1) spatiality, (2) resistance, (3) relative persistence. Thus a colour appears to the ordinary man more objective than a tone, partly because it appears to be placed outside him in space, and partly because the colour-properties of things appear to depend for

their permanent perceptibility on fewer and less variable conditions than their tone-properties. A piano always seems to have much the same colour in the daylight, but it only gives out sounds when the keys are struck, and even then the sound resulting from a given key depends on very variable circumstances; the piano easily gets "out of tune." Hence it is not without some justification that the "naïve realism" of popular thought inclines to the view that the colour is "*in*" the object, but the tone "*in*" me. As for organic sensations, I would simply ask the reader to judge for himself whether any violent organic pain does not tend for the time being to annul the subject-object consciousness altogether, especially if it is a "diffuse" and vaguely located pain. Even so definitely localised a sensation as that of toothache may produce this effect if it is only intense enough. In the most painful moments of a night of toothache, it hardly seems to be *we* that have the toothache. the pain seems to drive out every other content of consciousness, until it alone constitutes for the time being the whole of our experience, we do not so much *have* it, we *are* it. For the time, past and future, and the external world seem forgotten and abolished, and the universe consists of one big impersonal throb of anguish.

In the light of such considerations as these we seem driven to the following conclusions. (1) The subject-object form of consciousness is not a primary and inseparable form of human experience. There is a more primitive state, which was probably our condition in our ante-natal days, as well as in our earliest infancy. At this earliest stage of experience we have as yet neither "subjects" nor "objects," but impersonal psychical contents. (2) The ordinary psychological laws of recognition, assimilation, and association, laws which there is every reason to suppose applicable to animal as well as to human mental life—will sufficiently account for the fact that qualitatively identical elements entering into different psychical contents are recognised and discriminated from their varying accompaniments. In this discrimination of regularly connected sets of experienced qualities from their varying concomitants we have the beginning of what is sometimes called the "objectification" of our sensations. (The name may be conveniently retained so long as we take care not to forget that the state of mind which

precedes this "objectification" is not one in which sensations are regarded as subjective, but one in which no distinction between subjectivity and objectivity exists) The characteristics which make it specially easy for groups of connected sense-qualities to be thus discriminated, in other words, the characteristics which favour the development of the "object" consciousness, are externality in space, permanence or recurrence in consciousness without sensible modification of quality, resistance to attempts to produce such modification by the movements of our limbs. According as these characteristics manifest themselves more or less completely in the various departments of sense-experience, the complex clusters of qualities perceived by the various senses acquire to a higher or less degree that character of independent existence which is described in abstraction by the term object. For a full and admirable description of this development I must be content to refer the reader to chapters II and V of H. Cornelius's excellent *Psychologie als Erfahrungswissenschaft*. (3) Meanwhile, among the various *objects* thus differentiated from the original primitive experience-mass, there early appears one which comes to have a very special position in our developed thought and perception over against all the rest. This special object is the *subject* or self in its crudest and most primitive form¹. It is originally identical with the body, but afterwards, under the pressure of experiences which show that changes may go on in the body without producing any effects in consciousness, comes to be distinguished from it in various more or less ambiguous and unsatisfactory ways. In fact, the puzzles about personal identity all arise from the fact that, though we cannot help trying to identify the object which is "ourself," it constantly refuses to be fully identified with any one object or group of objects within its experience. Its limits thus constantly fluctuate without any assignable bounds.

So much has been written on the subject of the gradual development of the child's sense of personality that it would be superfluous for me to insert a sketch of the process here.

¹ I am here using the term subject in the common sense in which it is the logical correlate of "object." In chap. I the same word has been used to denote a unit-centre of consciousness in general—apart from the question whether the subject-object relation exists for such a consciousness or not. The more extended use of the term is logically indefensible, but practically unavoidable, in the absence of any suitable designation of the simpler forms of psychical life.

It will be enough just to remind the reader of one or two important points which will be found more fully stated, together with the evidence for them, in any good book on child psychology. The most important of these points, in my opinion, is that the subject itself seems at first to be distinguished merely as one object from others, the full recognition of the unique position of the subject and its difference from all other objects whatever comes later. We have assumed the truth of this already by making our account of "objectification" turn entirely not on the distinction between the subject and its experiences, but on the distinction of some contents of experience from others. The empirical justification of this view is to be found partly in the fact that the self as originally conceived by children and primitive tribes is just the body, i.e. that complex of sensation-contents which it is, for various reasons, most easy and natural to discriminate from all others, partly in the well-known habit of many children of speaking of themselves during the earliest years of their lives in the third person¹. Such a habit cannot well be explained satisfactorily except on the supposition that the child is at first to itself simply one object among a host of others, it takes time and mental development before the point is reached at which one group of sensation-complexes stand out against all others in the exclusive position expressed in speech by the use of the first personal pronoun. Even when this point has been reached, the self which the unsophisticated call "I" and "Me" still retains its character of object. If "I" and "Me" in the mouth of the plain man no longer mean just the body, they mean a soul conceived vaguely enough after the analogy of the body, and regarded, like it, as being some sort of sensation-complex, the pure "Ego" or "subject" that from its nature can never be object is so far from being a primary psychological reality that one may fairly doubt whether it has any existence at all except in the imagination of philosophers. It is nothing more than the bare logical abstraction of the distinction which, as we have seen, exists in the developed, though not in the

¹ It would be tempting to compare the mental condition stereotyped in the formulae of a language like Japanese, which is said to possess no pronouns, but to express all relation between speaker and person addressed by nominal periphrases (F. Muller, *Grundriss*, II 2 313), but this is probably due, as F. Muller says, to false etiquette.

embryonic human consciousness, between the relatively fleeting contents which occupy the "centre" of consciousness and the relatively stable contents which form its psychic margin or fringe or setting

If these conclusions are warranted, however, we are justified, I think, in asserting that the existence of the "Eternal Self" is inconsistent with all that scientific psychology has to teach us of the actual growth of personality, and the arguments by which that existence is supposed to be proved fallacious and inconclusive. And if this is the case, we may well maintain that no satisfactory theory of ethics can be built upon so unstable a foundation. Yet, lest I should not have carried the reader with me in all that I have said in the last section, I will add one further contention to what has been urged already, and it shall be this (b) If the "eternal" self exists, it is yet positively useless and out of place in a theory of ethics. For in ethics we are dealing throughout with time-processes, wants, movements towards their satisfaction, duties and their discharge, and with these as taking place in the psychical history of concrete individual selves. In other words, whether there really is an eternal spiritual principle which is in some transcendental sense myself or not, the self with which I have to do in moral theory and practice is an empirical self, made up of peculiar physical and psychical dispositions and tendencies, such as in all probability never have appeared and never will appear together in any previous or future human being. It is for this complex empirical product of heredity and environment, and the thousand incalculable conditions that we call chance, and not for that abstraction of the subject-object relation which is in me just what it is in any other man, that I am called upon to advise and act.

The "eternal" self of Green and his followers, then, is (a) out of all relation to the empirical wants and aspirations which it is the business of a sound morality to satisfy. An "eternal" self which is always just what it is now can have nothing to do with desires of unattained satisfactions and aspirations after unrealised ideals. And a "timeless" self must somehow stand outside all the processes by which we get our satisfactions and reach our ideals, for all are time-processes. The "eternal" self, then, if it exists, seems neither to feel our needs nor to

share our enjoyments, neither to be enriched by our acts of virtue nor impoverished by our crimes. It would apparently be unaffected by the loss of all our laboriously gotten spoils, and we may be excused if we conclude that it has had little to do with the winning of what it can afford to lose with such indifference. Through the whole course of our life it must, if it would not forfeit its timeless self-sameness, remain untouched by all the changes and chances of fortune and mortal circumstance. Surely in ethics, of all sciences, such a "self" as this has no place.

(b) Nor do I see what use can be made of the "Eternal Self" in establishing a theory of duty. Suppose I am told that the general precept of morality is, 'Realise thine Eternal Self'. The question at once arises, But *why*, if my Eternal Self is real already? nor can the doubt be properly met with an easy paradoxical answer, "That is just why". Waiving this difficulty, how am I to know *what* to realise? This self that is but the abstraction of the subject-object relation is shadowy and formless as the moonlight reflection of a ghost. It is realised as much in one mode of action as in another, as real in crime as in heroism, in indolence as in strenuous industry. *Be yourself!* is no doubt to most men a valuable moral precept, but only because they understand it of the self known empirically to them, or such part of it as they deem worthiest. *Be yourself* never means *be the subject-object relation!* or *be the understanding which makes nature!* To take the maxim in this sense would make it practically identical with Kant's formal imperative, and would expose us to all the unanswerable criticisms which have been passed by Hegel and his successors upon the Kantian categorical imperatives. Hence, just as Kant has to pass from the formality of his original imperative to the concept of humanity as a great social community before he can get any definite content for his system of duties, so Green has tacitly to identify an eternal self which, as first described, is the mere logical form of the subject-object relation, with the ideal of a perfect human society. Yet there is really between the two a great gulf which no logical ingenuity can satisfactorily bridge over.

It seems as if Green's account of the "Eternal Self" had arisen from an amalgamation of elements derived from two

very different sources. On the one hand, his study of Hume and the Associationists seems to have impressed him strongly with a sense of the necessity for investigating the subject-object relation and the nature of predication, two points which were both unduly overlooked in the Association psychology. On the other hand, he brought to this task a conception of the world as a spiritual being derived from Spinoza and Hegel. In the "Eternal Self" we seem to get as a result of this double philosophical activity an unfortunate fusion of the "subject" of the subject-object relation with the God of Spinoza. By this fusion, Spinoza's God is largely emptied of contents, instead of being the most concrete of realities, and embracing within himself all the "eternal modes" which constitute the "essence" of individual souls, he has become an abstract logical category repeated without modification in each of the countless individuals; and the "eternity" of the human mind, instead of being identified with its power of understanding its own history and destiny, has to be placed in its supposed exemption from the general process of organic evolution. Hence, akin as Green and Spinoza were at heart in their conception of the world, there is no philosophic system which more readily adapts itself to the postulates of evolutionary science than Spinoza's, there is none which it is more difficult to reconcile with those postulates than Green's. If Green's views of ethical method are sound, then ethics and ethics alone among the sciences constitutes a standing exception to the general course of the progress of human knowledge at the present day.

There is just one more point upon which I should like to offer a few remarks before passing on to that more detailed examination of ethical facts which will occupy the remainder of this essay. It may reasonably be expected that we should indicate the reasons for the popularity of those metaphysical theories of ethics which we have found to be at once so widespread and so fallacious. The secret of the hold which these theories have upon students of moral science is, I think, to be found in the special interests naturally attaching to the knowledge of one's self and one's duty. The alternative to the acceptance of a metaphysical theory of the self as the basis of an ethical system is a frank recognition that our

psychological and ethical concepts are, like the concepts employed in the physical sciences, of a provisional and symbolic character, and only partially adequate as representations of fact. But this admission, so readily made where the objects of nature and the laws of physics are concerned, is only given with the greatest reluctance when it is a question of our insight into our own mental constitution and our duties. Our interest in the knowledge of ourselves is so great, and the practical issues which depend upon our comprehension of our duties so considerable, that we find it almost impossible to believe that there is the same admixture of arbitrary abstraction and one-sided hypothesis in our theories about the nature of the soul as in our theories about matter and force. Here, we think, if anywhere, we cannot afford to repose our confidence in anything short of final and unalterable truth. And as the history of metaphysical speculation has but too often shown, it is but a single step from, "We cannot afford to stop short of final and unalterable truth," to the assertion "We have not stopped short"¹. Thus does our sense of the gravity of the issues at stake affect our judgment on the character of the information before us.

Yet, if the argument of this and the preceding chapter has any validity, it must by now be abundantly clear that as a matter of fact our psychological and physical hypotheses grow up in much the same way as our physical theories, need readjustment from time to time in view of new discoveries in much the same fashion, and lie open to much the same criticism from the metaphysician and the epistemologist. For instance, the analytic psychologist is bound, for the purposes of his science, to treat the concrete processes of mental life as complexes formed by the combination according to given laws of simpler elements, just as the physical philosopher treats the sensible masses of matter as complexes built up of imperceptible corpuscles. Yet, whatever may be the fortunes of physical atomism, no scientific theory can be more manifestly a merely "symbolic" way of representing the facts of

¹ The readiness with which we commonly allow ourselves to confuse the propositions, 'I cannot afford to be in the dark about the nature and destiny of my soul,' with the very different statement, "I am not in the dark about it," is well illustrated by the "*Credo ut carbonarius*" attitude of the disciples of Professor James towards metaphysical questions of this kind.

experience than psychological atomism. It is a scientific scheme which is of inestimable service, yet we cannot but perceive that as an account of what actually happens in the soul it is inadequate to the point of absurdity. So again with all our formulations of laws of recollection, recall, etc. It needs very little critical insight to see that our whole terminology, when we speak of the disappearance of ideas from consciousness, of the traces they leave behind them of their reinstatement or reproduction, is made up of the most barefaced symbolism, and makes no attempt to give anything like an adequate account of what actually takes place in the psychological organism when we forget or recollect. Yet our terminology, mythological as much of it confessedly is, happens to be sufficiently near the truth to lead to approximately true results, and consequently justifies our provisional use of it. *Eg* when we talk, as some psychologists do, of the continued existence in an unconscious form of the memory-images or ideas corresponding to various experiences, our language is, strictly taken, self-contradictory and nonsensical, and therefore clearly does not adequately represent the way in which the psychophysical organism is really affected by a temporarily forgotten experience. Still, we may on the basis of this merely metaphorical and "symbolic" psychology construct a fairly good working theory of the conditions under which the forgotten experience will be remembered again, and thus the fiction of the continued existence of the memory-image in an unconscious form may be allowable as a working hypothesis until some one invents a better, provided only we do not make the mistake of treating it as an adequate and truthful description of facts.

A thorough examination of the hypotheses and assumptions of current psychology would confirm us in the convictions which the examples just cited suggest. We should at every turn be compelled to acknowledge that the theories of psychology are not deductions from metaphysically certain first principles, but are convenient working hypotheses for the colligation of facts about the mental life¹. And as the facts of mental life are hitherto only very imperfectly and

¹ For a fuller consideration of this matter the reader may be referred to M. Raub's valuable work, *La Méthode dans la Psychologie des Sentiments*, Paris 1899.

inaccurately known, we have every reason to suppose that many of our most prominent psychological hypotheses and generalisations are destined to undergo no slight transformation as the regions of fact with which they are concerned become better known and more fully explored. Why, then, we may reasonably ask, should we not recognise that the same is the case with the propositions of ethics? Ethical science, it is true, has on the whole been more assiduously cultivated in the past than psychology, and the questions which it seeks to answer are in the main easier of solution. Yet the connection between ethics on the one side and the sciences of psychology, anthropology, and even natural history on the other is so obvious and so close that it should be clear that the defects of the latter are certain to be reflected in the imperfections of the former. A really satisfactory ethical theory would have to be based upon a reasonably complete examination of the facts of the ethical consciousness. And these facts are not to be obtained in their entirety, as we too often seem to assume, by the mere reflection of a civilised and philosophic student upon the sentiments which he finds in his own breast and in the literature of his age. Such a review of ethical phenomena as would enable us to construct a really adequate account of the moral ideal, the moral sentiments, and the probable course of moral progress is only to be obtained after a comprehensive investigation of the moral code and moral practice of our own age and civilisation, of other civilisations which are now flourishing or have flourished at an earlier period of history, of uncivilised nations and savage tribes in different parts of the world, even, as far as may be possible, of the customs and practices of the lower animals, in so far as they seem to imply the existence of sentiments of social approbation and disapprobation. Such an ethical theory can clearly not be constructed until our knowledge of psychology, anthropology, and natural history has advanced far beyond its present limits. In the meantime our ethical theories are bound to be more or less provisional, our descriptions of moral ideals and our analyses of moral sentiments may often be such as further discoveries in the sciences just mentioned will hereafter show to be erroneous. It is not indeed likely that future advances in psychology and

anthropology will very largely modify the main lines of the analysis of moral sentiments, but on the other hand we may reasonably expect that our views as to the course of moral development will undergo very considerable alteration as our insight into the mental structure and history of mankind grows clearer.

Thus it would seem that the most reasonable position for the writer on morals at the present time is first to give the best account of existing moral sentiments and ideals that his knowledge of psychology and of mankind will allow, pointing out at the same time that any such account is liable to undergo substantial modification with the advance of psychological and anthropological science, and then to contribute his individual part towards effecting such an advance by undertaking some piece of careful detailed investigation into the actual ethical practices and theories of present or past society. I have, however, already in the last chapter spoken so strongly of the importance for ethical study of special investigations of this class that it is unnecessary to say more on the subject here, though I should like once more to repeat that, as far as I can judge, it is altogether the most pressing and valuable work that can, with our present resources, be done in the ethical field, and is in every way more deserving of the attention of students of moral philosophy than the barren task of dressing up old generalisations in new disguises and repeating old polemics in new phraseology which the philosophical public seems to expect of them.

In the present essay I shall be compelled, both by the original limitations of my subject and by the limitations of my own studies, to confine myself to the former part of the double task we have just assigned to the moral philosopher. I shall do my best in the remaining chapters to present the reader with as accurate a picture as I am able to draw of the general body of current moral sentiment and theory, in so far as it bears upon the question of the proper basis of ethical science and the relation of ethics to metaphysics. We shall find that this survey of the concrete facts of ethics fully bears out the conclusions we reached in our first chapter upon a general consideration of the conditions of the problem. We shall see that, though the ethical sentiments and convictions

of civilised society have their origin in a single psychological root, they develop along two divergent lines, so that it is quite impossible to reduce the moral practice of an intelligent and conscientious member of a civilised community to the pursuit of a single consistent ideal that this divergence of development manifests itself most conspicuously in the form of an irreconcilable conflict between two types of virtue, neither of which satisfactorily embodies the complete moral ideal finally, that in the experiences of what for want of a better name we shall have to call "religion," this incurable duality of morality is partially, but only partially, overcome With this result our examination of the ethical side of human nature will have reached its close If we succeed in showing that even in those experiences of an enlightened evangelical religion which are the highest development of the ethical side of human character, there are still elements of contradiction and discord which we do not know how to reduce to harmony, our case against treating the ethical life as the working out in detail of a metaphysical principle will be complete May we hope that incidentally our treatment of ethical facts will, in its degree, help to prove the positive side of our contention—that the one necessary and sufficient basis for a theory of ethics is psychology—the word being understood in that comprehensive sense in which it includes the psychological side of anthropology and natural history?

CHAPTER III

THE ROOTS OF ETHICS

If before they had comen to the popular and received notions of virtue and vice, pleasure and pain, and the rest, they had stayed a little longer upon the enquiry concerning the roots of good and evil, and the strings of those roots, they had given, in my opinion, a great light to that which followed.—FRANCIS BACON

It is not altogether an easy task to say with precision at what stage in the evolution of psychical life the modes of feeling and action which we call moral make their first appearance in a rudimentary form. In our attempt to find an appropriate starting-point for our review of the phenomena of the ethical life, we are unavoidably exposed to the risk of choosing our point of departure either too high or too low in the scale of psychical development. If our speculative interest lies chiefly in the description and analysis of the ethical facts as they present themselves in their fullest development in the conscious and systematic morality of civilised persons and races, we shall naturally be tempted to find the essential characteristics of morality in the possession of a sense of responsibility, a feeling of reverence for the moral law, or a concept of common good. If, on the other hand, what impresses us most strongly is the evidence afforded by comparative physiology and psychology for the continuousness of all bodily and mental life, we shall probably incline to simplify our notion of the requisites of moral action so as to embrace under that term as far as possible not only human but animal behaviour. It should be clear, however, that both these courses are open to serious objection. If we demand, for instance, with Green, as high a standard of intelligence as is implied in the possession of a concept of common good before we admit the claims of a

creature to be considered a moral agent, we run the risk of excluding from the list of moral beings all mankind, with the exception of a few saints and philosophers, while if, with Spencer, we are content to regard all conduct as good which results in a surplus of enjoyment, we shall be compelled to recognise mollusca and crustacea, to say nothing of still more rudimentary organisms, as moral beings. In either case it is not difficult to see that we shall be committing the so-called "psychologist's fallacy." The metaphysician who, because he finds that the concept of a common good is the logical form in which a conscious and articulate morality expresses itself, draws the conclusion that where this concept is absent there is no morality is crediting children, savages, and the unreflective generally, with the possession of ideas which he has only obtained himself by reflective analysis of actions which are in them the outcome of spontaneous and immediate emotion, the evolutionist who widens his conception of morality till it embraces all pleasure-producing and pain-avoiding movement is forgetting that animal behaviour, which in its results, as observed by an outside spectator, coincides with the moral action of human beings, may for all we know, in its inner and psychological aspects, as lived through by the animal itself, be entirely devoid of those features which bestow on human "moral conduct" its distinctive tone and character.

It is clear, then, that the proper course for the specially ethical philosopher lies somewhere between these two extremes "Obligation," "duty," "common good," are, as we shall have abundant opportunity to see in the course of our investigation, highly complex concepts, and do not make their appearance as actually operative in determining the actions of mankind until a comparatively high level of customary morality and of intelligence has been attained, moreover, as we shall also see reason to believe, there are aspects of morality which each of these concepts fails to embody, they express for us not the original single psychological root of moral sentiment and conviction, but different sides of the diverging lines of development which the original moral sentiment undergoes in the course of social evolution. On the other hand, our knowledge of animal psychology is as yet not sufficiently accurate and extensive to enable us to say to what extent the types of sentiment which in

human beings we know as moral exist in a more rudimentary form in the infra-human world. That animal behaviour, if closely studied by competent psychologists, would present us with such *analoga* of morality it is only reasonable to believe, but in the absence of really trustworthy information on the subject it would be highly unscientific to found our ethical theories upon uncertain and fanciful interpretations of actions which we can only study from the outside.

The task of the moral philosopher is thus exactly similar to that of the psychologist. In the present state of our knowledge, at any rate, it is the primary business of both to present us with an analytical description of the workings of the adult civilised human mind couched in the simplest possible terms and harmonising with all that we know of the previous development of the individual and the race. Our first business, then, as students of morals is to ascertain what is the simplest and most rudimentary form in which the distinctively moral sentiments can be detected in specifically human experience, to the beast-world, at present at any rate, we are not justified in looking for more than incidental analogies confirmatory of conclusions already based upon an examination of our proper subject-matter, the human mind. Within the limits thus prescribed us, the simpler and more rudimentary the psychological processes in which we can succeed in detecting the essential features of moral life the more thoroughly will our work of analysis have been done. Here, as everywhere, the "Principle of Economy" must be the first principle of a sound scientific method, and our aim must therefore be to describe the complicated facts which we have to study by the aid of the fewest possible hypotheses, and to banish from the hypotheses we employ all merely "symbolic" concepts, that is, all concepts which are not correct representations of what under known conditions we believe to be possible contents of direct experience. In proportion as we are in the course of our description of ethical facts true to this methodological ideal, our hypotheses may be regarded as genuine theories, and our descriptions as true scientific explanations. Of the impossibility of completely attaining this ideal in any limited and circumscribed department of science we have already spoken in our first chapter.

The reader will perhaps have observed that we have more

than once in the last page or two made an apparently incidental but not unimportant assumption as to the character of the psychological facts which most immediately form the subject-matter of moral science. We have several times referred to those facts under the general name of "the moral sentiments," a designation more in vogue with writers of the last century than with the philosophers of to-day. This somewhat obsolete name for our subject has been purposely selected, in order to emphasise our dissent from the theories of ethical method which have been made popular by the metaphysical moralists of the Anglo-Hegelian school. In the hands of the moralists of this school ethics is, as a glance at the table of contents prefixed to such a work as Green's *Prolegomena* will show, a doctrine first of all of the metaphysical implications of moral action, and secondarily of the nature of the moral ideal or ultimate ethical end. We too have already admitted that a critical if not a constructive investigation of the moral ideal is an essential part of a complete account of ethical facts, but, holding as we do that psychology and not metaphysics is the true foundation of ethical theory, we are forced to maintain that the only satisfactory basis for such an investigation is to be sought in an accurate description of the ethical side of experienced psychological facts, that is, in an analysis of the ethical sentiments of civilised mankind.

Our choice of the term, however, has not been dictated solely by our desire to make it clear that we intend our ethical theories to rest upon a psychological and not a metaphysical analysis. We intended also, by speaking of the "ethical sentiments" as the primary subject of our discussion, to protest in advance against a popular view according to which the business of ethical psychology consists in the analysis of motives. Next to the doctrine of the dependence of ethics upon metaphysical theories of action, there is probably no mistake which is responsible for the introduction of more confusion into our science than the notion that the business of the moral philosopher is primarily to analyse the motives from which men act, or ought to act. The very word *motive*, if we examine it a little closely, will prove, like the kindred words "cause" and "action," to be a perfect hive of confusions in itself. Partly it seems intended to describe experienced

psychological facts, partly it stands for some sort of metaphysical theory about the ultimate nature of moral action, and it is practically impossible to disentangle the psychological facts from the extra-psychological accretions of metaphysical theory which the word regularly carries. The discussion of "motives" still plays so large a part in current ethical theories that it may perhaps be worth while to examine the meaning of the word and point out our objections to its employment with a certain amount of detail.

As we have already said, the meaning of the term "motive" seems to consist partly in metaphysical, partly in psychological theories. On the metaphysical side the term "motive" is intimately connected with theories about the "will" and the limits of its "determination" or "freedom," and the degree of identity between natural "causation" and "causation" in the moral sphere. It is debated, for instance, whether the will is inevitably "determined" to action by the "strongest motive," and if so whether the will can be called "free" or not, or again whether "motives" determine the will to action in the same sense in which natural "causes" determine the existence of their effects, whether there is such a thing as "natural necessity," and if so whether it is the same thing as moral necessity. The very enumeration of these problems is enough to show that they have to do not with the description of psychological facts, but with certain metaphysical theories about the ultimate implications of those facts, and we are, therefore, justified in banishing them one and all from a psychological system of ethics to that series of metaphysical discussions which, according to our view, should properly form an appendix and not a set of prolegomena to ethical science. It is not until we have succeeded in collecting and describing as adequately as we can the actual experiences of the moral life that it becomes possible to discuss the meaning and applicability of the categories of "freedom," "causation," and "determination" to the ethical phenomena. Just as we cannot profitably raise the question of the meaning and value of the category of "causation" in physical science until we have before us a considerable body of empirically won generalisations as to the actual facts about physical processes, so we cannot possibly ask whether, and in what sense, the "will" is "free"

or "determined" in moral action until we are in possession of a fairly complete description of the workings of the human mind as we actually experience them in ourselves or infer them from the behaviour of others. Until we have ascertained the actual facts about the ethical side of human behaviour, we have nothing to do either with the "will" or with "determination by motives" or "freedom." What we have actually before us is a vast number of mental processes or acts, as we may call them, if we consent to suspend all discussion of the metaphysical implications of that word, presenting certain common psychological characteristics, and it is only by first constructing, by the methods of empirical psychology, a detailed description of these processes, that we place ourselves in a position to judge whether the hypotheses suggested by the terms "will," "motive," "freedom," etc., are helps or hindrances to the clear and adequate description and representation of the facts. The construction of hypotheses so abstract and "symbolic," and so far removed from the suggestions of immediate experience, is the last, and not the first, step toward a comprehensive theory of the nature of morality.

We may, then, at the present stage of our examination of the ethical phenomena, dismiss from consideration as premature all the more metaphysical associations of an analysis of motives. The categories and hypotheses with which we begin our ethical inquiries must be not the most abstract and highly elaborate, but the simplest which suggest themselves upon a comparison of the various particular experiences to which we apply the common name of "moral." As in the physical sciences, so in the psychological, the only ultimately satisfactory method of procedure is to take our departure from those "natural" or "pre-scientific" hypotheses which suggest themselves irresistibly and almost insensibly upon the first serious comparison of a body of experienced contents possessing a common character. Such further elaboration and modification of our first "pre-scientific" hypotheses as is needed to bring them into close agreement with growing experience, and to render them more adequate as descriptions of the facts, will be inevitably brought about as, partly from extraneous causes, partly by the aid of the original hypotheses themselves, the contents of our experience become richer and more varied. When this process has

yielded a fairly elaborate and systematic set of secondary or "scientific" hypotheses applicable over a wide range of experience contents, it is time to test the adequacy and truth of the hypotheses by a comparison with the known formal characteristics of a "pure" experience, but not before. It would be premature to undertake an examination of the metaphysical implications of the concepts of ethics until we have ascertained empirically, by starting from the simplest hypotheses and adding to them or modifying them as increasing insight into the more complex ethical phenomena dictates, what are the concepts which ethics needs to employ.

If, then, our study of ethics is really to depend upon an analysis of our motives to action, we must agree to make the analysis a purely psychological one. We must agree to dismiss from our minds all metaphysical theories about the will and its "determination," and to imply by our use of the term "motive" nothing more recondite than some simple and obvious characteristic of the moral life as it is immediately experienced by mankind. The hypothesis involved in the use of the concept must be psychological, and it must be of the most elementary kind. As it happens, however, it is practically impossible to reconcile the use of the term "motive" to denote a constant and elementary psychological characteristic of moral action with the existing psychological associations of the word. As commonly employed, both in ordinary discourse and in writings upon ethical subjects, the word "motive" covers a confusion between two entirely different things: (1) the sentiment or emotion accompanying the initial stages of a course of action, (2) the end or result contemplated by the agent. It is in the former sense that we speak, for instance, of humanity or compassion as the motive which leads a man to relieve the necessities of his poorer neighbours, in the latter sense that we call the prospect of a competency for life the motive which has prompted a marriage or the acceptance of a situation.

It becomes, then, a matter of the first importance in any psychological account of human conduct, to be quite clear as to which of these two entirely distinct senses of the word "motive" we have in our mind. And it is, I think, manifest that it is only in the first sense of the word that an analysis

of "motives" can reasonably be said to be the foundation of scientific ethics. The "motive" in the second sense of the word is, to begin with, not what we directly praise or blame when we pass judgment on an act or a character as good or bad, and, moreover it is often not a psychological fact at all. The all-important psychological fact that we have in our mind's eye when we praise a character as "good" is, that the man of whom we are speaking is *affected* by the prospect of certain results of his actions, or by the contemplation of certain existing circumstances, in a particular way, pleasurable or painful as the case may be. A man is not regarded as good simply because he performs or even purposes the same actions as good men do, but because it is believed that in performing or purposing those actions he shares the emotions which the typically "good" exhibit in similar circumstances. As Aristotle rightly insists, the test of a man's virtue is that he should *feel* on the various occasions of life as the *φρόνιμος* feels.

And when it is said that a man may throughout a long life perform right acts from wrong and base motives, what is meant seems to be that his feelings during the contemplation or the execution of the virtuous act are not those of the virtuous man. For instance, the "self-righteous" man may set before himself much the same "ends" as the man of genuine virtue. He may oblige his neighbours, discharge all his obligations, relieve the distressed, and all this of set purpose, and yet he cannot be pronounced a man of real virtue, because in the performance of all these duties his emotions are other than those of the genuinely virtuous man. Though he may be entirely guiltless of consciously proposing the gratification of his self-conceit to himself as the result to be obtained by his conduct, it remains the fact that where the truly virtuous man would feel the stirrings of compassion, the "self-righteous" man experiences a thrill of self-satisfaction. As far as the "ends" actually proposed to themselves as objects of action go, there may be no appreciable difference between the two men, it is in their sentiments that the all-important distinction between the two consists, at least for psychology. In other words, the analysis of motives in any sense in which it is the primary question for moral psychology means the analysis of sentiments, the analysis of the emotions

called forth by the contemplation of various lines of action. It is in the quality and the strength of the emotions thus excited, whether by courses of action suggested for our imitation, or by reflection upon our own past behaviour or the behaviour of others that the psychological difference between the good and the bad man consists.

Similarly, when the goodness or badness of a particular act is said to depend upon the *motive* from which it is done, the meaning is that the morality of the action is determined by the quality and intensity of the sentiments awakened by the prospect of achieving certain results. A motive, in any other sense than this, can hardly be said to be a psychical fact at all. The "ends" for which we are said to act, and for aiming at which we are called good and bad, are most often not so much objects clearly and consciously set before ourselves as the results to be achieved by our action, as tendencies discerned in our actions by other persons after the event. As such they cannot be properly regarded as real psychological facts. The real psychological fact represented by another person's statement about the "ends" I pursue in life is commonly no more than this, that certain kinds of behaviour have throughout my career been attended by certain forms of emotion or sentiment. Thus when we say of a public man that his consistent aim throughout his life has been the exaltation of himself at the expense of his party or his country, we do not necessarily mean that as an actual fact he has consciously proposed this state of things to himself as the result to be brought about by his action, all that our charge need imply is that the occurrence or the prospect of situations in which he himself gains by the losses of party or country has habitually been attended with pleasurable emotion sufficiently intense to pass over into action. As we sometimes express ourselves, he may have pursued his selfish ends without realising that he was doing so. In order to warrant our damnatory verdict, the selfish sentiments which we ascribe to the condemned statesman must have been psychological matter of fact, the degree in which he was intellectually clear about his "ends" must always remain highly problematical.

We may take another example of the extreme ambiguity of the ordinary use of the term "motive," and the necessity of

extreme caution in admitting it into psychology, from a slightly different quarter. It is a commonplace of ethics that the human heart is so utterly deceitful that we are constantly being deluded not only as to the motives of our fellows, but even as to our own. What more common, for instance, than the discovery that an action we believed ourselves to have performed from motives of magnanimity was really prompted by a desire to make ourselves a reputation, or that what at the time struck us as a natural consequence of our love of justice was after all no more than the gratification of an old grudge? Or which of us, in declining a challenge to a duel, would be able to say without misgivings whether he was acting from cowardice or from a lofty sense of duty? In such cases as these we have at first sight a most puzzling psychological problem. If "motives" are, psychologically speaking, feelings, what can be the meaning of the assertion that I thought at the time of action that I was prompted by a generous motive, but now find that it was a base one? Surely, it may be argued, there can be no such thing as an unconscious motive, an emotion is, from the very nature of the case, just what it is at the time felt to be, nothing more and nothing less.

What, then, is the meaning of the common expressions which assume that a man may be mistaken about his own motives? What are the real psychological facts which these phrases are intended to describe? The solution of the problem is, I conceive, this. In a certain situation I find myself under the influence of emotions strong enough to lead me to confer a benefit upon some person not possessing any particular claims upon me beyond those arising from the fact that he is a fellow-man and is in need of assistance, and to bestow this benefit at some considerable cost to myself. So long as I have nothing to judge by except the fact that the sacrifice was made and that the emotions with which I made it were of a pleasurable kind, I shall naturally suppose that those sentiments were aroused solely by the need of a fellow-man, and were those of a generous person. But it may afterwards occur that occasions for similar sacrifices present themselves under circumstances in which there is no possibility of my act of beneficence becoming known to the world. Supposing

that on these occasions the emotions awakened by the contemplated sacrifices are altogether painful, and consequently lead me to refuse to make them, I shall then be driven, unless I am to assume the intervention of a radical change in my own character, in obedience to the principle of economy, to infer that other circumstances than the mere need of the person benefited were responsible for the emotions I felt on the former occasion, and consequently that these were not the sentiments of pure generosity. The psychological fact in the case of the mistakenly interpreted motive was simply the response to certain stimuli with emotion of a certain character and intensity. The emotion was, of course, just what it was felt as being, an unfelt emotion would be a *contradictio in adjecto*. The mistake came in, not in estimating the emotion, but in apprehending the circumstances necessary for its production, and the statement that my original belief as to the character of the motives has been proved erroneous is simply a "symbolic" way of saying that what I had hitherto believed to be the conditions present when the emotion was felt have been once more experienced, but without a revival of the emotion.

Examples of this kind might easily be multiplied, for the purpose of showing that any statement about *motives*, so far as it represents experienced psychical facts apart from metaphysical theory, can always be translated into a statement about the quality and intensity of a sentiment and the conditions under which it has been experienced. We shall do well, therefore, to prefer the unambiguous language of a confessedly empirical psychology to the obscure utterances of a hybrid science composed of psychology and metaphysics, mingled in unknown proportions, and to say boldly that the first part of a complete ethics is an analysis of the moral *sentiments*, in other words, an account, in the language of purely empirical psychology, of the emotions that we consider to have a moral quality, and the conditions under which they make their appearance. We have, in fact, to ask, In what do our feelings towards acts and characters that we judge good or bad differ from our feelings about those that we consider merely indifferent, and to what kinds of character and action do these peculiar emotions attach themselves?

This leads me to notice a further peculiarity of ethical method which has too often been overlooked. The key to the comprehension of our ethical sentiments is to be found in the analysis of the reflective judgments which we pass upon the actions of our neighbours and upon past actions of our own as we review them in memory. It is true that most recent moral philosophy has tended to substitute for the analysis of our moral judgments an analysis of our moral aims or ends. Instead of asking, "What sort of conduct is it that we approve?" recent moral philosophy, for the most part, prefers to ask, "What are the ultimate ends we are trying to secure when we act laudably?" We substitute, that is, for the examination of our ethical sentiments, as they express themselves in our habitual judgments on past actions, an attempt to examine the state of our own minds in the moment of action. This is, however, I conceive, a most unfortunate deviation from sound scientific method. It is in its effect upon ethical science much as if in our æsthetical theory we were to neglect the analysis of judgments of taste in order to examine the mental attitude of the creative artist, in the moment of creation, towards his work.

The reasons for preferring to found our ethics rather upon an analysis of the reflective moral judgment than upon an analysis of the action judged, appear to me in the main to be two. In the first place, the aims and ends we propose to ourselves as results to be achieved by our actions are so numerous and multifarious that it is practically impossible to reduce them to anything like system, our reflective judgments upon the moral quality of our behaviour, on the contrary, are already before we submit them to psychological analysis wrought into something like systematic shape, they are already judgments, not so much upon individual pieces of conduct, as upon classes of action. And in the second place, as our consideration of the meanings of the word "motive" has suggested to us, it is by no means easy to say exactly how much is before the mind in the moment of action. For, as we have seen, the "motive" popularly supposed to be influencing the mind of the agent may only in part be a real psychological fact. This difficulty is largely obviated by taking as the direct object of our study not our actions them-

selves, but the judgments which we pass upon them and the emotions with which we look back to them. For it is clearly a consequence of the more reflective character of the subsequent judgment passed upon an action, as contrasted with the more impulsive character of the action itself, that it is much easier to know what is before the mind when we praise or censure our own past actions or the actions of a third person than when we are directly acting. Every reflective judgment of praise or censure is, in fact, a sort of natural or pre-scientific ethical theory about the quality of a certain *class* of actions. Every such judgment, if fully stated, would have to take the form, "In so far as the psychological state of the agent at the time of performance of the action was such and such, the action was good or was bad." In every reflective judgment on character, then, we have, as we should not have if we began our science with an attempt to analyse directly the psychological condition of an agent during the performance of his action, a rudimentary universal generalisation.

And these rudimentary ethical universals are, for moral science, exactly what the rudimentary generalisations of pre-scientific thinking about the course of natural events are for physical science—the indispensable basis and starting-point for all more exact and scientific research. In ethics, as in all other departments of knowledge, our first conscious steps toward accurate science presuppose the previous possession of a number of more or less inaccurate generalisations which have been won by unsystematic reflection and comparison, and may be called "unconscious" or "natural" hypotheses. To place an analysis of "motives," rather than an analysis of those *ex post facto* reflective judgments in which our opinion of the morality of whole classes of actions finds its expression, at the beginning of an inquiry into moral science, would be voluntarily to deprive one's self of the assistance of these "natural" hypotheses. Perhaps I may add, as further justification for the view here put forward, a quotation from what I have said on the same subject in another place. "If we would know what is of the essence of morality, perhaps our best course is to consider rather the nature of the moral judgments we pass on the acts of others than our own psychological state at the moment of action. No doubt the passing of moral

judgments on the acts of another implies a sense of morality as of something which we ourselves are bound to do, and the evolution of the one necessitates a corresponding growth of the other. But it will, I think, be found that, as a matter of fact, the moral judgment on outsiders becomes articulate earlier than the sense of our own moral shortcomings; we learn to expect certain performances from those around us, and to be displeased if they are not forthcoming, before we have an equally acute perception of the corresponding obligations upon ourselves. Hence, if we would find what morality, in its simplest form, involves as an irreducible minimum, we must, I think, betake ourselves to the analysis of the moral judgment.¹ Of course it is obvious also that what is here said of our judgments upon the actions of others will apply without serious modification to our calm retrospective judgments upon our own past conduct, provided that there has been an interval of time sufficient to enable us to take an impersonal and dispassionate view of our proceedings.

We may sum up the positions at which we have now arrived in the following series of propositions. Ethics is an empirical science having its basis in the wider science of psychology. Its primary object is to effect an analysis of the moral sentiments, i.e. certain peculiar forms of emotion which are commonly aroused in us when we contemplate the past or prospective actions both of other persons and of ourselves. A satisfactory ethical theory would have, in the first place, to supply a psychological description of these emotional processes in simple and, as far as possible, in non-symbolic terms (that is, in terms each of which is itself under known conditions a matter of direct experience); in the second place, to write the history of their development, regarded as a chapter in the general psychological evolution of humanity; and finally, to give some account of the classes of action by which, in various stages of the history of civilisation, these emotional processes are aroused. In other words, the contents of a scientific theory of ethics would naturally fall into three main divisions: (1) an analytical, and (2) a genetic theory of the moral sentiments, and (3) an account of the moral ideal and of moral progress. The labour of constructing the

¹ *International Journal of Ethics*, April 1896, p. 363

first of these three divisions of ethics, the analytical psychology of the moral sentiments, is considerably lessened by the fact that in all civilised societies the pre-scientific everyday reflection of the community has embodied the sentiments awakened by whole classes of action in a more or less systematic collection of moral judgments, which form in their entirety the customary moral code of the community,¹ and may, from the point of view of epistemology, be described as a body of "natural" hypotheses or theories on ethical subjects. This preparatory work of the unscientific understanding the moral philosopher accepts as the starting-point for his own more systematic investigations, which thus assume the form of an *analysis of the moral judgments*.

We may now describe ethics as we please, either as the *theory of moral sentiments* or the *theory of the moral judgment*; but we must, if we choose the latter designation, be careful to bear in mind that the *moral judgment* itself is in the last resort based upon moral sentiments, and constitutes, in fact, an incipient hypothesis as to the conditions under which the moral sentiments are evoked. The ultimate psychological fact of human nature which is responsible for the existence of ethics as a branch of inquiry is simply that the conduct of ourselves and of others affects us emotionally in certain ways, which must now be more particularly described.

What, then, are the simplest forms of emotion which can be regarded as distinctively ethical, or, in other words, are manifestly identical in quality with the more complex and highly developed moral sentiments of a civilised community, as expressed in its customary judgments of actions and characters? The answer to our question is indicated in admirable and

¹ Of course I am including in the "moral code," as here described, not only the "moral" code of society in the narrower sense, but also its "social code" and "code of honour." It is commonly only certain rules of conduct recognised by all classes of the community which get the name of "morality." Rules of conduct peculiar to particular classes are more commonly called "social regulations" or "rules of honour." The distinction, however, is at best one of degree, in kind the feelings evoked by a breach of morality and by a violation of the code of honour are indistinguishable. It is only when a "religious" sanction is attached to the one code and not to the other that the difference becomes one of importance. In a society which recognises no such religious sanctions, a breach of the code of honour may easily awaken more moral reprobation than an offence against morality. It is only linguistic associations that make it difficult for us to say that in certain societies a refusal to fight a duel is regarded as more immoral than an act of adultery. I reserve the consideration of the modifications undergone by ethics when brought into connection with religion for a later chapter.

forceful language in a characteristic passage from an eminent author whose delight it was to convey profound ethical truth in the guise of fantastic and sensational romance. "Right and wrong," says Paul Somerset in *The Dynamiter*, "are but figments and the shadow of a word but for all that, there are certain things that I cannot do, and there are certain others that I will not stand." The empirical foundation of ethics is securely laid, apart from all metaphysical theories of freedom and the noumenal self, in the simple fact that there are certain things which we cannot see done without loathing, and certain others that we cannot see done without praising the doer.¹ The peculiarly ethical emotions, the feelings which find expression in all our moral judgments on men and events, are the feelings of approval and disapproval; the characteristically ethical attitudes towards things are those of praise and blame. It is this attitude towards the world which manifests itself in the systematic classification of things and of men as "good" and "bad." That man or that thing is "good" in our eyes the contemplation of which affects us with emotions of approbation, that "bad" which we cannot view without sentiments of loathing and disapproval.

The "good" is thus, psychologically considered, not to be identified with the "useful," nor the bad with the "useless" or "detrimental." It is, no doubt, as we have already admitted, one part of the moralist's task to discover the objective qualities in things and persons which arouse in us the ethical sentiments, and it is perfectly true that the investigation of this problem leads us to the conviction that it is in the main qualities useful, *i.e.* serving to maintain or increase vitality, to the individual and the community which are recognised as "good," but, looking solely at the psychological attitude expressed by the judgment, "This is good," we are forced to admit that it is primarily not the recognition of the usefulness

¹ The proposition in the text, however, needs to be supplemented by the consideration that there are certain things which we feel equally strongly we will do and make others do. It would be a mistake to suppose that morality is in origin merely prohibitive, though the mistake is natural in a civilised society in which the outward and visible embodiment of moral sentiment in law has come to have a mainly negative and restraining content. The native Australian, for instance, is *forbidden* by custom, so omnipotent that non-compliance is visited by death, to marry into the wrong class, but he is *compelled* by an equally binding custom to undergo the rites of initiation. "Thou shalt" is as primitive an expression of the moralistic temper as "Thou shalt not."

of an object, but the presence of the feeling of approval which the judgment expresses. Where our emotions are untouched, the perception that a given object is adapted to the securing of certain results is not enough of itself to call out the judgment "good." It is only when we are "interested" in the purposes for which a thing is "useful," in other words, only when our emotions are aroused, that we stamp the thing with our approval by calling it "good." One can easily imagine to one's self a race of beings absolutely without emotion, mere disinterested spectators of the course of the world and the life of man. Such onlookers would no doubt, according to the proverb, see more of the game of life than the players in it, whose vision is constantly liable to be confused by their passions. They would as readily as or more readily than ourselves detect the fitness of one thing and another for employment towards various ends, but to their impartial gaze there would neither be "goodness" about this fitness nor "badness" about its opposite, having themselves no feelings of interest in the events and processes of the world, they would praise nothing and censure nothing, and the vehement expressions of human ethical admiration and loathing, if they could once hear them, would to them be no more than words uttered in an unknown tongue and accompanied with apparently purposeless gestures and grimaces. Our transports of enthusiasm over some act of more than common nobility, and of rage at some unheard-of villainy, would probably appear to them as grotesque as the mouthings and gesticulations of an unintelligible Frenchman to an English yokel.

Either, then, we must redefine the "useful" so as to make it mean that which conduces to ends in which we feel an *interest*¹—and this practically amounts to our own definition of "good,"—or else we must admit that the identity of the "good" and the "useful" is a synthetic proposition, and that the two concepts at least are of different origin. For methodological reasons we prefer the latter course. We understand by "good" whatever awakens in us the sentiment of approbation,

¹ We usually feel an interest in what conduces to our own preservation or increased vital efficiency, so that the "good" in most cases roughly coincides with the "useful." But for one who has lost the "desire to live," the good may be identical with decrease of vitality, in other words, with what is, for the biological onlooker, the harmful. This point will be dealt with more fully in a later chapter.

by "bad" whatever is regarded with disapproval or blame, and we leave all discussion of the degree to which the good is identical with the useful, the conducive to life, etc., for a later occasion. We say, then, that the primary ethical sentiments are those of approbation and disapprobation, and that the logical form in which the presence of these sentiments towards any object finds expression is the judgment in which the predicates "good," "bad," or their equivalents are asserted of that object. The exceedingly wide range over which the ethical sentiments extend is at once shown by the statement just made. Things, actions, persons, are all alike in some sense or other called "good" and "bad," and are all alike the objects of approbation and disapprobation during the earlier stages of intellectual development. As intelligence grows and accumulating experience leads to the recognition of such distinctions as that between persons and things, the modification of the primitive attitude towards the world involved in the creation of these categories naturally leads to corresponding modifications in the sentiments awakened by different classes of object. "Good" and "bad" come to have a difference of meaning according as they are employed to describe persons or things, and for the civilised consciousness only persons and their actions are directly objects of ethical sentiments, though, as it would be easy to show, things too only retain the name of "good" and "bad" in so far as the contemplation of their properties indirectly arouses those sentiments. To trace in outline the history of this development will be the object of a later paragraph of the present chapter.

Before we can enter on this subject, however, there still remain for consideration some points connected with the very simplest manifestations of the ethical sentiments. We have said that the primary ethical fact is a psychological one, and that it is this, that the most primitive human consciousness, that of the savage or the child, views some things and actions with feelings of approval and others with feelings of disapproval. It is in this psychological peculiarity that the moralist finds the characteristic which is, from his special point of view, the *differentia* of human nature. The merely "animal" consciousness, as we sometimes picture it to ourselves, in order by the contrast to invite special attention to the peculiarly human

type of mind, is figured as experiencing pleasure and pain, but not as knowing what it is to approve or disapprove, to praise or blame. Any mind capable of the judgment, "This is good," is, for the moralist, in its essential features a human mind, and, on the other hand, the mind which has not as yet the experiences expressed in such a judgment is as yet not truly human, and can only be called so where, as in the case of an infant of our own species, we have warrant to believe that subsequent mental growth will bring these experiences in its train. For the purposes of moral philosophy the minds of the higher animals, if there should ever appear reason for crediting them with the sentiments of which we are speaking, would be entitled to be considered as one in kind with our own, while the mind of a child that has not yet experienced these sentiments is only prospectively human.

Such a statement as the foregoing of the "irreducible minimum" of psychological development necessary for the appearance of morality will probably be found unsatisfactory by two very different schools of critics. One party will say that our "minimum" includes too little, the other that it comprises too much. From the one side we may expect to be told that "obligation," "sense of duty," "conscience," are simple and ultimate ethical facts, and that a consciousness for which these concepts do not exist is not really an ethical consciousness at all. From the other side we shall hear that approbation and disapprobation are themselves complex psychological states, and that, if we would begin at the very beginning, we must show how these sentiments are developed out of the still more primitive experiences of simple pleasure and pain. To both sets of critics we feel that some answer is owing, and we will try to supply it to the best of our power.

We will begin by considering the position of the last-named moralists, who propose to explain the formation of moral sentiments and judgments as a necessary consequence of simple experiences of pleasure and pain. For this school of moralists the fundamental assumption of ethics is the excessively simple one that some experiences are pleasant and some are painful. If you will grant them this assumption, they are prepared to show how the repetition of pleasant experiences is naturally sought and the repetition of painful experiences

avoided, and thus on the simplest possible psychological basis to account for the growth of all our elaborate codes of morality. The excessive simplicity of the theory is certainly a point in its favour, and it therefore becomes incumbent upon us to explain in what points our own account differs from it, and to justify the differences if we can.

First, then, a word as to the way in which the simplest sentiment of approval or disapproval differs from a feeling of pleasure or pain. The difference, it is clear, lies not in the affective or purely "feeling" side of the two experiences, but in the presentative (or representative) elements with which the feeling-tone is in either case combined. The cognitive or presentative side of approval and disapproval is decidedly more complex and belongs to a higher level of mental development than that of the mere pleasure or pain experience of the simplest kind. To constitute a pleasure or pain experience of the kind which, by repetition, engender, according to the Hedonistic psychology, all our more developed and complex moral sentiments, nothing is necessary beyond the immediate presence in consciousness of a sensational content with marked positive or negative feeling-tone. Pleasure and pain experiences of this kind are thus conceivably present in the very lowest and most rudimentary consciousnesses known to exist. The behaviour of such elementary organisms as even the *Infusoria*, so we are assured by competent observers,¹ is only to be explained by the supposition that their movements are expressive of strong likes and dislikes, otherwise, of experiences of pleasure and pain. But it should be clear that in such primitive forms of emotional life as these we have not yet any experiences which can properly be called by the name of approval and disapproval. Approval and disapproval belong to a more developed and reflective type of mental life than the simpler experiences of pleasure and pain, they imply the possession of "representative" mental images or "free" ideas. Approbation implies pleasure arising from the contemplation of some experience belonging to the past, or the expectation of some experience awaited in the future, disapprobation, similarly, implies pain arising from similar sources. It is not, even in the simpler cases, the immediately present of which we approve

¹ See Romanes, *Animal Intelligence*, chap. 1

or disapprove, but the immediately past or momentarily expected. In the simplest form to "approve" our present state is to contemplate its continuance with pleasure, to disapprove it is to view its continuance with displeasure. Of course it may be argued that even the simplest feeling of pleasure *as experienced by a human consciousness* involves some degree of such projection into the future, and is thus already at least implicitly a judgment of approval. This would be the basis of Nietzsche's saying that "Alle Lust will Ewigkeit."

Thus the cognitive element in the experiences of approbation and disapprobation is not a direct presentation or sensation, but a "re-presented" content or idea. To write the history of the evolution of these sentiments in their simplest form would be to write the history of the development of memory and expectation. We might, in fact, say that science and morality make their first appearance at the same level of psychical evolution, and are called into being by the same circumstances. Wherever you get the comparison of an idea with present reality, if the idea is condemned as nugatory you have the beginning of science, if the reality is condemned as falling short of the idea you have the beginnings of morality. As science begins in a disappointed expectation, so morality begins in dissatisfaction.

We can now explain both how far we can go with the psychologists who derive all the phenomena of the moral life from simple experiences of pleasure and pain, and where we part company with them. With the general doctrine that the simplest types of concrete mental process which are to be found in the life of the adult human being are the outcome of a long psycho-physical development we have no desire to quarrel, if it cannot be said to be proved, there is at least sufficient evidence of continuity in the world of psychical life to make it highly probable. Against the theory now under consideration of the particular lines along which the moral side of mental life has developed, we have, however, more than one serious objection to urge. In the first place, we cannot insist too strongly that what has developed in the course of the supposed evolution is not the affective, but the cognitive side of our emotional experiences. The pleasure accompanying the simplest sensational experience and the pleasure of memory or

expectation are *qua* pleasurable feeling identical in quality, a history of the evolution of one of these forms of experience from the other would therefore be a history not of the evolution of a new and more complicated affective or feeling-quality but of the evolution of memory-images and representative ideas. The task which some psychologists have attempted to solve by a theory of the evolution of our sentiments from simple pleasures and pains of sense is really no less a task than the derivation from simple sensations of representative imagery and "ideation." The psychology which succeeds in explaining, without further assumptions, how the sentiments of approbation and disapprobation have been evolved out of mere experiences of pleasure and pain will, at the same time, have succeeded in explaining the evolution from merely sensational beginnings of memory and expectation.

It is this fact which constitutes the justification of our own selection of the sentiments of approbation and disapprobation, in preference to the feelings of pleasure and pain, as the primary psychical facts which a theory of ethics must assume. However strongly convinced we may feel that memory, expectation, and free ideas, as they exist in the human adult psychical life are the products of evolution and have a history behind them, we cannot avoid admitting (*a*) that in the present stage of our knowledge of child and animal psychology any attempt to write that history must be highly speculative, and ought therefore never to be allowed to influence our descriptions of the facts as discovered by analysis of the adult consciousness: and (*b*) that, if the history is ever written, the simple experiences from which these more complex modes of consciousness will be ultimately derived, will not be *mere* events in the way of pleasurable or painfully toned sensation. What *analogs* of human memory and expectation there may be in the mental life of a jelly-fish or an oyster we cannot of course say, but it is monstrous to assume without any evidence that there are none, simply because we are unable to say what they are.

Meanwhile, it seems manifest that if the mental life of the lowest organisms is nothing more than a succession of sensations, human mental life cannot properly be said to be continuous with theirs. Continuity would, in this case, belong not to the psychical but merely to the physical side of organic

life, and we should have to explain, *eg*, the appearance at a certain stage of evolution of "free ideas" by the supposition that a continuous physiological development may lead at a certain stage of its course to the appearance of new psychical phenomena which cannot be analysed into combinations of those which preceded them, and are therefore, properly speaking, neither derived from them nor continuous with them. The impossibility of passing, by mere combination of existing elements, from a *purely* sensational experience, devoid of memories and expectations, to an experience containing "ideas" seems so manifest as to force upon us one of two alternative conclusions. Either some rudimentary form of memory and ideation is characteristic of all mental life from the lowest to the highest, or else it is only by a convenient abuse of language that we speak of continuous mental evolution, the truth being that the continuity only exists on the physiological side.

Which of these alternatives is correct we cannot in the present state of our psychological knowledge say, and may perhaps never be able to say. But wherever the truth may lie, it would seem that, for the analysis of the moral life of a human individual or community, we must assume the existence of sentiments of approbation and disapprobation by the side of mere feelings of pleasure and pain, with exactly the same right and the same necessity as that by which modern scientific psychology assumes the existence, by the side of sensations, of memory-images and "free" ideas¹. In both cases, for the purposes of psychological analysis, the more "developed" and complex form of psychical life must under one name or another appear as an ultimate and irreducible fact. It is only after the task of analysis has been satisfactorily performed that we are in a position to raise the question whether a comparison of the adult human mind with those of children and animals

¹ Nothing is more characteristic of recent psychology than its dissatisfaction with the tacit assumption of the old Associationist school that, given the existence of sensations, the existence of ideas can at once be explained by dubbing them "reproduced" sensations. I need hardly do more than refer the reader, on this point, to the *Psychologies* of Stout, Ebbinghaus, and H. Cornelius. The Wundtian school, clinging to the old language about "reproduction," but they seem hardly to have realised the difficulties of the problem.

It is perhaps necessary to explain briefly just how much we understand by discussion of an "idea" and the present seems the best opportunity for doing so. By an "idea" then we mean a mental state or content referring to or standing for some feature of perceptual experience.

would enable us to trace the gradual formation of distinctions which, in the analysis of adult human minds, appear ultimate.

For these reasons I feel compelled to regard the somewhat complex phenomena of approbation and disapprobation as the simplest elements into which the moral experiences of adult human life can be analysed. Whether there are or are not in the infra-human world experiences of *mere* sense pleasure and pain untinged by memory or expectation, I am not called upon to decide; it is enough for our purposes that such *merely* sensuous experiences form no part of the human mental life with which we are concerned, and that in any case the bridge which leads from them to experiences in which we approve and disapprove is one which we are unable to construct. We content ourselves, then, with remaining on the right side of the chasm. The bridge, if ever it should be constructed, will have to be made, not by the distinctively moral philosopher, but by the student of general psychology. The demand for its construction is a demand not for the analysis of the moral sentiments into their simplest factors, but for the derivation of moral experience as a whole from experience which is as yet not moral. This task we may safely leave in the hands of the psychologist, precisely as æsthetic theory leaves it to the psychologist and the anthropologist to trace if they can the evolution from mere pleasure and pain experiences of the particular forms of emotion which it recognises as, properly speaking, æsthetic. For the analytical part of the derivative sciences, at least, both sets of emotions are ultimate facts.

We have now in principle, I trust, made good our case against critics who find our primary ethical assumptions too complicated. But before we go on to examine the views of some who will probably think those assumptions too simple, we may perhaps be allowed to call attention in passing to one

is such. The precise character of such states, considered in themselves and apart from their relation to absent perceptual experiences, *i.e.* their character as themselves experiences, is exceedingly difficult to determine and a full discussion of the point is greatly needed. For our purposes, however, the important feature about the "idea" is the uses to which it is put, and we are thus not called upon to enter upon extraneous psychological discussion as to its character as a mental event. I may remark in conclusion that the test of the presence of "ideas" in the animals has to be sought in ability to adapt their movements in advance to *future* modifications of their environment. Where this power is present we may fairly say, not perhaps that the animal *has* ideas, but that it acts as if it had, and must be treated by psychology as if it had ideas.

confusion which has sometimes given the Hedonistic psychology of the cruder kind an appearance of more plausibility than it really possesses, and which has quite recently reappeared in the pages of so acute and generally discriminating a psychologist as H. Cornelius. In explanation of the supposed genesis of our sentiments of approbation and disapprobation out of a mere sequence of pleasurable and painfully toned sensations, we commonly find it stated that the "revival" or "reproduction" in idea of a sensation which has been found pleasurable or painful, includes in itself a "revived" image of the past pleasure or pain. We are said to have "ideas of" future or past pleasure and pain, exactly as we have "ideas of" future or past sensations of tone and colour. And it is then supposed to be self-evident that it is the remembered or imagined pleasure which leads us to the performance of actions fitted to secure the repetition of the pleasant experience. This supposed ideal revival and anticipation of pleasurable emotions is, as far as I know, the only evidence which has ever been offered in proof of the fundamental doctrine of the Hedonist psychology—the doctrine that pleasure is the only thing which is or can be desired. And it is, as we can easily see, evidence which rests on nothing better than a confusion. An appeal to introspection will show—at least such is its result in the case of the present writer—that it is impossible to have a representative image or idea of pleasure or pain. I find that, in the most careful examination I can make of my own mental state at the time of recollecting or anticipating pleasurable or painful experiences, I can in no way imagine or represent in idea the past or future feeling of pleasure or pain. I can succeed in more or less vividly calling up the ideas of the sights and sounds, etc., which were on a given occasion found pleasant or painful, but the pleasure or pain itself is gone completely without recall. Thus in trying to recollect as exactly as I can the sensations connected with a slight but painful operation, I succeed in obtaining images of the tactual sensations aroused by the lancet, but I can get no image of the pain that accompanied them. In fact, the only evidence that memory furnishes of the painfulness of the incision is my recollection of having made some remark on the subject to the surgeon immediately after the operation.

And in the same way, when I, as we commonly say, "anticipate a pleasure," introspection reveals to me the fact that I possess "ideas" of the various perceptions that I expect to receive, but shows me no trace whatever of an idea of the pleasure with which I infer from my knowledge of my own tastes that those perceptions will be accompanied. The pleasure or pain accompanying an anticipation or a memory is, in my case at any rate, no part whatever of what I anticipate or remember, it is present as actual feeling, not as revived or reinstated images of feeling. I have, in fact, neither anticipations nor recollections of pleasure or pain, but merely pleasurable and painful anticipations and recollections of events in the way of sensation and perception. I for my individual part, at any rate, can attach no meaning whatever to the phrase "a remembered pleasure" or "an anticipated pain." And, if one may judge by the emphasis laid in treatises on psychology upon the radical difference between presentation and feeling, the majority of psychologists seem to be in the same plight as myself¹

Nor would the plain man, I think, reject our conclusion if it were put before him in simple language, and contrasted with the extravagances of the alternative view. The plain man may talk conveniently but inaccurately of anticipated pleasure and pain, but he does not really believe that the mental sufferings of the prisoner in the condemned cell are the "anticipated pain" of the halter, or the rapture with which the tobacco-less wayfarer hails the distant prospect of a town the "anticipated pleasure" of his pipe. The fact which is confusedly and inaccurately expressed in popular language by this talk of remembered and anticipated pains and pleasure is,

¹ It may, however, be doubted whether the impossibility of having ideas of pleasure and pain of itself shows that feelings and presentations are absolutely heterogeneous. Most psychologists are, I believe, agreed that there can be no "ideal revival" of organic sensations. By the most painstaking attempts I have never succeeded in calling up in myself an ideal equivalent of an absent sensation of smell or taste. I could find *words* to describe such absent sensations, and I should recognise them again on their recurrence, but I am, as far as I can discover, utterly incapable of realising in imagination the smell of a rose or the taste of salt. From the utterances of the books on psychology, I am led to infer that this is an exceptional state of things, but in any case it serves to show that there are presentations which have no ideal equivalents. Is not my inability to imagine so very striking a sensation as the taste of salt also evidence in favour of the view that an idea is something generically different from a sensation, and not the sensation itself in a "weaker" form?

accurately expressed, this, that the ideal equivalents of sensational experiences of a pleasant or painful nature are commonly themselves also pleasant or painful according to the emotional quality of the original sensations. I say "commonly" and not "universally" in order to call attention to an argument put forward by H. Cornelius in defence of the existence of "ideas of" pleasure and pain. There must, he argues, be an emotional element in the case of a remembered pain or pleasure other than the actual feeling-tone at the moment of reminiscence. The memory of our past troubles is often extremely pleasant, and more than one great poet has stamped with his approval the saying of Boethius that *in omni adversitate fortunæ infelicitissimum genus est infortunū fuisse felicitem*. Cornelius holds, therefore, that in a case, *e.g.*, of pleasure derived from the memory of past suffering there must be present both the actual feeling of pleasure and an *ideal* equivalent of the old pain. And similarly in the more common case, where the memory or anticipation of pain is itself painful, he would distinguish the actual present feeling from the ideal presentment of the expected feeling, thus disagreeing *in toto* with ourselves, according to whom the actual present feeling is the only emotional element in the case.

Surely, however, this argument of Cornelius' is based upon an inaccurate usage of language, which is exceptional in so careful a writer. What is actually remembered of past trouble is not the feelings of pain, but the sensations and ideas which were found painful. The events I recollect directly, and by remembering the extravagant things that I said and did at the time, I come indirectly by the knowledge that those events were painful. Thus I may recollect trying, under the pressure of some great misfortune, to make away with myself, and may thus mediately know how extreme must have been the pain that I endured, but the pain itself suffers no "ideal recall." The only emotional accompaniments of the recollection of my attempted suicide will be those actually present feelings which arise out of the mutual reaction between the ideas involved in the recollection and the rest of the contents of my experience at the moment of recollecting, and these feelings may perfectly well, if my present position is one of freedom from all anxieties, be, as Cornelius says, eminently pleasurable. He is

only wrong because he supposes our knowledge of the past state of our emotions, which is always, as we have seen, second-hand and indirect, to be matter of immediate perception, and to be given in the "ideas" of the events we are remembering¹

It is this impossibility of reviving "in idea" our perished feelings which makes it so much easier for us to be mistaken in our accounts of our past emotions than in our accounts of the events with which they were connected. Not all men, probably not most men, who attempt to persuade their neighbours that they have all along approved of some venture which they have really done their utmost to discourage so long as its success was doubtful, are consciously insincere. In the absence of ideal equivalents of the old sentiments of distrust, it is indeed the most natural thing in the world to assume that what fills us now with satisfaction and exultation must always have had the same effect. How indeed should any man, other than a psychologist, suspect the opposite?

The bearing of these considerations upon the views of ethics we have been criticising is twofold. On the one hand, our inquiry into the emotional attendants of the "ideal revival" of experiences in the way of sensation throws a curious light on the assumptions of that kind of psychology which regards it as self-evident that sensations should reappear, with all their peculiarities, in a somewhat less "vivid" form as "ideas." We have seen already that one important characteristic of sensational experience, its feeling-tone, does not reappear at all in the corresponding "ideas," which have regularly a feeling-tone of their own, depending upon circumstances among which the possession by the original sensational experiences of a special feeling-tone is only one. This result may reasonably lead us to question the whole psychological theory according to which "ideas" are simply "revived" or "recalled" sensations, and may thus serve to confirm us in our original refusal to include in our analysis of the ethical sentiments an hypothetical evolution of sentiments, including an ideal element, from merely sensational experiences²

¹ For a final exposure of the fallacious character of the Hedonist assumption see chap. vi.

² It would be an excellent reform in psychology to disuse, at least until the relation of ideas to sensations has been subjected to much more examination than it has as yet received, all the customary phrases about the ideal "recall," "revival,"

The bearing of our conclusion upon the Hedonist psychology of moral action is still more patent. If there are, strictly speaking, no such things as "ideas" of pleasure or pain, the whole foundation of the old theory according to which anticipated pleasure and pain are the only incentives to action is dissolved at a single blow. For the one quality of a series of future experiences which, upon our showing, cannot be properly "anticipated" is the pleasurable or painful feeling with which they will be accompanied. These feelings can at best be known mediately and symbolically on the basis of inference from past experience, and it remains, therefore, for the psychologist who proposes to defend the proposition that "desire for pleasure" is the incentive to all our actions to show that the only ideas by which the will can be influenced are the mediate and symbolic ideas (consisting probably for the most part of ideal representations of movements expressive of emotion) involved in the knowledge that certain experiences will be pleasant. No proposition, to say the least of it, can be less self-evident than this, or less plausible. The secret of the apparent plausibility of psychological Hedonism lies in the confusion between the imaginary "anticipated pleasure" and the real pleasantness of the anticipation. It is tacitly assumed that the only anticipations which can be pleasant are anticipations of future pleasure, which is much as if one were, in the teeth of experience, to say, "No reminiscences can be painful but reminiscences of past pain."

Now that we can see that the true incentive to voluntary action is not the anticipation of pleasure, but the pleasurable anticipation of sensations and ideas, we find ourselves at once free from all those puzzles about the possibility of disinterested and unselfish action which Hedonism has always had to solve by various cumbrous and improbable psychological devices. We are no more called upon, for instance, to prove that a martyr will increase his sum of pleasures by being burned

"reproduction," etc., of sensations. In view of the powerful arguments which go to show that an "idea" is not a revived sensation at all, but a new psychic growth, it would be more accurate to speak simply of "ideal equivalents" of sensation, meaning no more by the phrase than that certain ideas represent for us in memory past experiences of a sensational kind in a way which at present remains for us an ultimate psychological fact. The older language is customary, and consequently convenient, but we should be careful, if we use it, to remember that it implies an hypothesis which is not altogether satisfactory.

than we are called on to show that because it is pleasant now to recollect a past danger it must have been pleasant to experience it at the time. Similarly, by this simple psychological distinction we avoid once and for all the supposed necessity of finding an egoistic origin for social sentiments. We obtain a basis for ethics which is as yet, and in its primitive form, neither definitely egoistic nor definitely "altruistic," and thus provides for that divergent development in the two opposing directions, the course of which we shall have to trace in subsequent chapters. Pleasure arising from the anticipation of certain experiences in the way of sensations and ideas is as such neither egoistic nor altruistic, but may be either, according to the character of the ideas and sensations anticipated. In short, we get rid finally of two most pernicious psychological prejudices. One of them is that "all desire is desire for pleasure," the other that "all desire for pleasure is primarily desire for my own pleasure." Of these two propositions the first is, as we have seen, commonly advanced without a particle of proof, as if it were a self-luminous truth, the second, as we shall see later on in the next section, does not even follow with any necessity from the other.¹ So frail is the logical structure of psychological Hedonism.²

Our answer to the other class of critics whose views we promised to consider will perhaps take us a step or two further towards the construction of a theory of the more complex phenomena of the moral life. These critics, it will be remembered, we supposed to complain that we omitted from our primary ethical assumption the concepts of "obligation," "duty," "responsibility," and, we may add, "free personality."

¹ That the second of these propositions is a necessary consequence of the first is frequently assumed by the defenders, and I believe always by the assailants, of Hedonism. In my undergraduate days at Oxford I used to hear the argument, "A desire for some other person's pleasure is not a desire for pleasure," brought forward as in itself an unanswerable refutation of Hedonistic views. H. Cornelius is the only writer with whose works I am acquainted who has openly traversed it (*Psychologie als Erfahrungswissenschaft*, p. 374), but I hope to show later on that he is right.

² Psychological Hedonism must be carefully distinguished from the strictly ethical Hedonism which, without committing itself to the psychological theory just criticised, merely maintains that, as a matter of fact, the "good" and the "pleasant" so far coincide that the pleasantness of a mode of life may be taken as an indication of its moral rightness. For this view, properly qualified, there is after all a good deal to be said, in spite of the severe and frequently unjustifiable assaults which have been made upon it by both Intuitionists and self-realisation moralists. We shall deal with its merits and defects in a later chapter on pleasure.

From the point of view of not a few of our most famous philosophers, a system of ethics that does not begin by postulating one or more of these concepts as an ultimate reality is not ethics at all, and, unless we can justify our procedure, we must therefore be content to sit down under the very imputation which we have ourselves brought against the Hedonist psychologists—the imputation of basing our ethics upon a psychological analysis which ignores the peculiar character of the ethical side of life. Let us see, then, how far we can defend ourselves against certain strictures which are sure to be passed upon us by the moralists of the Kantian as well as of the Intuitionist type

Our answer to the charge of having ignored the primary importance for ethics of the concepts of obligation, duty, responsibility, and free personality, will partake of the same double character as our whole argument against the subordination of ethics to metaphysics. In the first place, we contend, on general methodological principles, that none of these concepts possesses the characteristics requisite in an original scientific postulate. As we have already seen, the theories involved in the first assumptions of a science should be of that simple and “pre-scientific” kind which are insensibly and inevitably suggested by the course of direct experience, all the later elaborate and artificial hypotheses of science are no more than successive modifications of these primary theories called forth by the discovery of new factors in experience. Now the hypotheses represented by the concepts which are at present in question are unmistakably complex and highly elaborated. Some of them,—as, for instance, those connected with the notion of “free personality,”—belong to that most artificial and elaborate body of reflections upon our own hypotheses which we call “metaphysics”, all of them, in so far as they are concerned with the description of psychological facts, describe facts which are far from simple in their nature, and which admit, in some cases, of more than one interpretation. For these reasons we think we are justified in refusing on grounds of general method to begin our survey of ethical facts by taking for granted some elaborate theory of such complicated psychological phenomena as the sense of duty or the sense of responsibility.

But further, we propose to defend our view by presenting the reader with a sketch of the way in which, if our general theory about the elementary character of the moral sentiments is correct, the more complicated phenomena described by the names of responsibility, obligation, etc., come into being. We propose, that is, to justify our assertion that the mental states described by these names are capable of analysis into simple elements, by writing what we think, in its main outlines, a probable history of their growth. The primary ethical fact is, we have said, that something is approved or disapproved; that is, in other words, the ideal representation of certain events in the way of sensation, perception, or idea, is attended with a feeling of pleasure or of pain. All attempts to get behind this primary fact seem to take us at once out of the region of strictly ethical sentiment, and moreover to give us none but highly hypothetical results. We may, for instance, try to simplify matters still further by the hypothesis that experiences the ideal equivalents of which give pleasure have previously themselves been found pleasurable in their original sensational form, and similarly that those of which the idea is painful have themselves been originally attended with pain; but this proposition, plausible as it sounds, is after all only a statement of what is customarily experienced, not a universal psychological law. The quality of the emotion attending a memory or an anticipation depends, as we have already seen, as much upon the character of our present psychical state as upon the original emotional accompaniments of the experience now remembered or anticipated. Hence, while admitting the fact that the anticipation of experiences identical with those that have in the past been pleasant or painful is commonly itself of the same emotional tone, we have also to admit that there are many exceptions to this apparent law, and that it consequently is in no sense an explanation of the phenomenon it partially describes. For us the fact that the anticipation of certain experiences is pleasant or painful must, then, be an ultimate assumption incapable of further explanation, at any rate until the existence of ideas and the connection between their emotional quality and that of the corresponding sensation-experiences have received from the psychologists an elucidation which at present is entirely wanting.

Strictly speaking, we are altogether unable to say why the anticipation of a certain experience is pleasant and that of another painful. We can only say that (1) the emotional tone which has accompanied that kind of experience in the past and (2) the general character of our present mental state are both concerned in producing the result. A complete theory would only be possible if we possessed an insight into the emotional consequences of the "apperception" of one idea by others such as are at present utterly beyond our powers. Hence for the present we have to be content with *mere* probabilities, mere loose generalities, which we know to admit of exception, though we are absolutely without the means of computing the extent of the "probable error" which they contain. In practice it is *never* safe to argue that a man will be pleased by the prospect of renewing an experience which has in the past given him pleasure, unless you have reason to believe that there has been no serious alteration in his general psycho-physical condition. The readiness shown by many writers to assume as an obvious truth that what has been pleasant in experience must also be pleasant in idea or in anticipation is probably due to their forgetting that emotional tone never belongs to a single sensation or idea, but to the whole content of consciousness as affected by the appearance of the sensation or idea. It should never be forgotten that in speaking of the pleasurable or painful character of a particular sensation or idea we are indulging in exactly the same abstracting process as when we describe an explosion as due to the lighting of the fuse. It is as convenient and as inaccurate to talk of the pleasure-pain value of a single psychical process, apart from those which it apperceives and is apperceived by, as it would be to speak as if the lighting of the fuse would always explode the mine, independently of the moistness or dryness of the charge.

Setting on one side, then, as unfruitful all attempts to get behind the facts which we have described as those of approbation and disapprobation, let us raise the question whether the existence of these facts is not enough—given of course the general physical and social conditions of human life—to account for the development of the sense of responsibility and obligation, and of the concept of myself as a free moral personality. In

our attempt to answer this question we may perhaps discover fresh confirmation of our view about the impossibility of creating such an ultimately self-consistent body of ethical theory as we have a right to expect if ethics really rests upon previously ascertained metaphysical truth.

The first point to which we must call attention in our sketch of moral development is that the sentiments of approbation and disapprobation in their simplest form are, as we have said, neither egoistic nor yet altruistic, but, in the fullest sense of the word, impersonal. We must, in fact, in dealing with the very simplest forms in which the ethical judgment makes its appearance, take care to avoid vitiating our description of facts by introducing a distinction which has no real existence except in mental life of a highly developed and reflective type, and even there plays a much less important part than is frequently supposed. The tendency to read into our accounts of the most primitive forms of feeling and action sentiments which we find in ourselves and the other highly civilised persons who form the society in which we live, is so inveterate, and derives such powerful support from the necessity of describing the first rude beginnings of mental life in a language which is the latest outcome of centuries of development, that, without special care, it will be almost impossible for us not to fall into one of the mutually exclusive forms of the "psychologists' fallacy." On the one hand, it is, as we have seen, natural to assume that the earliest ideas to be "approved" are those which represent experiences which have in the past proved pleasant, and it is an easy step from this premise to the conclusion that the ethical sentiments and judgments of a child or a primitive man have reference exclusively to pleasures and pains consciously anticipated as his own, and are therefore egoistic. On the other hand, if we reflect upon the all-importance of the tribe and the insignificance of the individual in early society, if we remember the part that tribal opinion has manifestly had in forming the first crude unreflective customary morality of primitive races, and the similar part played to this day by the approval or disapproval of "elders" in giving a child its earliest notions of right and wrong, and if we further fortify ourselves by an appeal to the general theory of the conditions of organic

evolution, we are irresistibly tempted to conclude that the primary ethical sentiments of approval and disapproval have reference, not to the pleasures and pains of the individual, but to those of his community,—in a word, that they are from the very first *altruistic* or *social* in their character

As a matter of philosophical history, this difference of opinion in ethics has perhaps commonly gone hand in hand with a more general difference in scientific outlook. Moralists who have consciously or unconsciously been primarily influenced by psychological considerations have mostly leaned to the egoistic view. On this side of the question we have, for instance, Aristotle (who scarcely recognises self-sacrificing emotion at all, except in the case of voluntary exposure to the risks of war from patriotic reasons), Spinoza, the whole body of psychological Hedonists, and, as I think one may fairly say, the school of Professor Green. These last, it is true, would probably disclaim the title of psychological moralists, but as is only natural for philosophers who begin their theory of ethics with a doctrine of the "Self," they are at least so far egoists that they seem to think it necessary to defend self-sacrifice by the contention that it is really always disguised self-satisfaction¹

On the other hand, thinkers who approach ethics from the side of evolutionary biology tend with emphasis to identify morality with altruism, and to deny the moral value of self-regarding action, except in so far as it indirectly influences society. Thus while Hume and his followers have sought to account for all altruistic and "disinterested" sentiments as secondary consequences of the primary egoistic feelings, it is now not uncommon to meet both in literature and in conversation with the conviction that the egoistic sentiments are themselves secondary reflections in the consciousness of the individual of the estimate set by the community to which he belongs upon himself and his performances. In what is now to follow we shall try to show that both these opposing views are equally devoid of foundation in fact, and we shall thus, by showing that the ethical sentiments are originally neither

¹ As if it could not be shown by precisely the same kind of consideration and with the same cogency that all self-realisation is masked self-surrender. "If I lose myself I find myself," you say, but do not forget that if I find myself I lose myself

egoistic nor altruistic, prepare the way for the investigations of later chapters, in which we hope to prove that egoism and altruism are both divergent developments from a common psychological origin, neither of which can satisfactorily be treated as a comprehensive expression of the complete facts of the moral life. As we shall by and by see, it is one form of the irreconcilable duality that besets the moral life that morality is exhausted neither by altruism nor by egoism, both have their just claims upon our recognition, and yet though we can easily trace the growth of both from one and the same psychological origin, we are absolutely without the means of adjusting their rival demands. This, however, more properly belongs to the chapters which are yet to follow dealing with "types of virtue" and "the goal of ethics." For the present we confine ourselves to our immediate subject, the early stages in the development of the ethical judgment.

The ethical sentiments and the judgments which express them, we have said, are in their most primitive form neither egoistic nor altruistic, but impersonal. The reasons for making this assertion will at once be apparent. As we have seen, an ethical judgment of the most primitive kind requires for its formation nothing beyond the recognition that the anticipation of certain experiences is pleasant or painful. To say that I approve such and such an action or quality is, in fact, to say that when I imagine its entrance into the course of my future experience my state of mind is a pleasant one, to say that I disapprove it means that when I imagine it as forming part of the future course of experience, my state of mind is a painful one. To repeat what I have said before, wherever you get the contrast between experience as it is and experience as it might be if a certain idea were "realised," and an accompanying feeling of pleasure or pain, you have the rudiments out of which our mature moral judgments have been built up. Even in so primitive a phenomenon as the sulky dissatisfaction of the savage who has failed to bring down his prey or to tomahawk his enemy you have unmistakably an experience which proclaims its kinship with the more complicated conditions which civilised men know as "remorse" and "shame," just as in the naïve glee of the savage who has boomeranged his wild duck or scalped his enemy you have the first dawns of

of what civilised men call the sense of conscious merit or the applause of a virtuous conscience.¹

Now it is manifest that all the psychological conditions requisite for the formation of such sentiments as these are (1) the possession of ideas which are felt in some way, which for our present psychological analysis is ultimate and indescribable, to be different from the sense-experiences which they represent, (2) the ability in some rudimentary way to distinguish between past and future,² and (3) the capability of being pleasurably or painfully affected by the contrast between our actual experiences and those we anticipate or remember. Wherever you have a level of psychical life at which there exist ideas, memory and expectation, pleasure and pain, you have a consciousness sufficiently developed to feel approbation and disapprobation when the actual content of its sensational experiences is coloured by contrast with its memories and its anticipations.

But it is also evident that with the presence of this amount of mental development you have not necessarily got the conditions requisite for the definite recognition on the part of the experiencing subject of itself as one among a number of mutually exclusive selves. Such a degree of complexity and continuity of mental life as we have postulated as necessary to the formation of the first inchoate judgments of approbation and disapprobation is as yet very far from amounting to that sense of my own stable identity and that discrimination of "Me" from "You" that is implied in speaking about the consciousness of "self".³ As we have

¹ See the important footnote in Mr Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, p 431 (ed 1)

² Perhaps one should rather say "before and after". It may be fairly regarded as established that the time-consciousness begins with this distinction of before and after *within* a continuous present (S Hodgson, *Metaphysic of Experience*, vol 1. chaps ii and iii)

³ Though as a matter of fact such a distinction must have been reached very early in the history of intelligence. To the psychologist it is interesting to observe that in quite a number of more or less rude idioms (Ainu, Eskimo, Quichua, Guarani, Kiriri) there appear to be personal pronouns only for the first and second persons, the third, as subject of a sentence, being expressed by a noun or a demonstrative. This looks as if the distinction between "you" and "me" preceded that between both of us and "him" or "them". Yet the further step of recognising the relation of the third party to the other two cannot require great intellectual development, for the full series of three pronouns, all personal, already meets us in the Australian dialects. The Paniquita and Aimara dialects of South America, of which the former has the same form in the singular for the first and second, and the latter the same form both in singular and plural (providing only a different expression for the first plural when it includes the person addressed) are, one would expect, unique. For the facts see F Muller, *Grundriss der Sprachwissenschaft*, vol. II pt I

already seen, the most primitive experiences are not at first marked by the distinction between subject and object. It is only as a result of a long course of experiences, by which my own body is gradually marked off from the objects surrounding it, that "I" become known to myself as a subject at all. While these experiences are yet being made, it cannot properly be said that the contents of my experience are in the full sense "mine," for as yet there is no "Me", I exist as yet as a self only for the observation of other persons, and to them I am not "Me," but "Him". And it can hardly be doubted that among the experiences which precede the consciousness of myself as a "Me" there are already many of the type which we have recognised as the first beginnings of moral sentiments. Careful observers of the development of the infant mind, such as Professor Baldwin, have succeeded in detecting signs of rudimentary emotions of an unmistakably ethical kind, such as pride and shame, at a stage at which it seems clear that the child has not yet come to the consciousness of himself as a person in a world of persons. Indeed it may safely be said that it is very largely through experience of our own judgments of approval and disapproval of the conduct of others, and theirs of our own, that we come by the recognition of ourselves as persons in a society of persons. The distinction between myself and other selves, like the distinction between myself and the world, is not a formal presupposition of experiences, but a "pre-scientific" hypothesis created by experience, and among the experiences which have contributed to its formation those of an ethical kind are not the least prominent. Full and complete moral personality is not the beginning but the end of moral development; it is by progress in morality that we ultimately become really persons.

To apply all this to the controversy between egoism and altruism, we may say that, strictly speaking, the original approvals and disapprovals from which the moral judgment springs are as yet neither egoistic nor altruistic. It is not, until a sufficient level of reflection has been attained, for the approving or disapproving consciousness to distinguish between the anticipation of pleasure-bringing experiences for itself and for others that these distinctions, so closely connected with the complex thinking and acting of the civilised adult, can be

said to be founded upon a sound psychological basis. Before this stage of development is reached, we have in the primitive mind of the child, and presumably of the uncivilised man, to do with approvals and disapprovals which, on their cognitive side, consist of anticipations or memories of experiences not yet distinguished as belonging to a peculiar self or person. Hence the earliest sentiments of approval and disapproval may properly be said to be as yet impersonal, and therefore neither selfish nor the reverse.

One may still, I think, trace something of this impersonal approval and disapproval in the expressions with which a child of tender years will follow the fortunes of Jack the Giant Killer or Cinderella. If you tell the story of Cinderella to a very young child, taking care to expatiate in detail upon the glories of the heroine's appearance in her ball-dress or at her wedding, and then close your description with some such question as "Wasn't that nice, now?" you are almost certain to call forth from your auditor all the signs of rapturous approbation. In a person of mature years such an appreciation of the pleasurable experiences of some one else might plausibly be said to be the secondary product of "sympathetic" feeling aroused by "putting himself in the heroine's place." But when your auditor is a child of three, it hardly seems reasonable to introduce so sophisticated an explanation. It seems more natural to suppose that, in the childish mind, for which the limits which separate self from other selves must as yet be much less prominent than they become in after life, the idea of the experiences described in the story directly calls forth feelings of pleasure, and is consequently approved without any necessity for the experiences described to be recognised as those of "some one else." If this be so, we have clearly to do with a stage of mental development at which the beginnings of ethical feeling and judgment already exist before the distinction between myself and other selves has acquired the significance which it has for later life, and we thus seem to have, in the behaviour of quite young children, a refutation of the popular anti-Hedonist argument that a desire for pleasure must always be a desire for *my own* pleasure.

If our conception of the facts of primitive mental life be

correct, then, morality begins with a state of sentiment which is as yet neither egoistic nor altruistic, or, to use the technical language of the older psychologists, with desires which are as yet simply desires of certain experiences, not desires of those experiences for myself or for another. Yet when we come to examine the experiences which are actually anticipated with pleasure, we may trace in them, even in the earliest stages of mental development, the foundation of the future distinction between egoistic and altruistic action and sentiment. Even in the infra-human world we may see an *analogue* of this distinction in the broad difference between the instincts which make for the self-preservation and well-being of the individual animal, and those which make, at the cost of pain, privation, and even death to the individual, for the production and preservation of the coming generation. Instincts as such are of course yet neither egoistic nor altruistic, but at the same time the existence in the human or in all other species of the great broad distinction between the two classes of instinctive acts is the indispensable natural or pre-ethical basis requisite for the later development of moral sentiment along the two diverging lines of egoism and altruism.

For it is, of course, clear that when, with the emergence into consciousness of the distinction between idea and actual sensitive experience, the sentiments of approbation and disapprobation first make their appearance, the experiences anticipated with pleasure and with pain will be those which respectively arise from the discharge and the suppression of natural instinctive action. This is ensured by the fact that even where the discharge of instinctive action ultimately leads to painful consequences for the individual, as when the mother-bird dies in defence of her nest, the experiences attending the earlier stages of the instinctive action are presumably more or less pleasant and those attending its forcible repression certainly painful, as also by the fact that the past pleasurable-ness or painfulness of an experience is one determining condition, though not the only condition, of the pleasurable-ness or painfulness of its ideal representative. We can thus see how nature, by the very clash of instincts arising from the double position of an individual animal as an integral component of the existing generation and an instrument for

calling into being the coming generation of its species, prepares the way for the future conflict between the ethical ideals of self-realisation and self-sacrifice in the cause of the family, the state, society, or humanity¹

We can also see how the way is prepared by the construction of our psychical mechanism for the suppression and thwarting of original instincts of either kind, and the consequent growth of an extravagant self-abnegation or an equally extravagant selfishness. An animal devoid of the first beginnings of the "ideal" form of psychical life, and consequently without memory and expectation, would be capable of neither of these opposed forms of moral perversion. In the absence of any remembrance or anticipation of the painful consequences of a certain course of instinctive action, the present pleasantness of the instinctive discharge or the painfulness of its inhibition would with a mechanical fatality bring about the performance of the acts requisite, for instance, to the production and protection of the coming generation, at whatever cost to the parent animal. But with the acquisition of ideas and the ideal types of experience, memory, and expectation, it becomes possible in such a case for the recollection of previous consequences of the instinctive performances to reverse the feeling-tone originally connected with its discharge. The action, each successive stage of which, except the last, was previously attended with pleasure, may now be anticipated with pain and consequently disapproved, the repetition of this sequence, once hardening into habit, may then lead to the complete suppression of such instinctive actions as originally secured the well-being of the coming at the expense of the existing generation. Or, in the same way, experience of the effects produced in other members of the family by an originally instinctive act of self-preservation may, by causing an emotional reversal, lead to the suppression of an instinct by which the adult animal was originally preserved at the cost of its young.

Thus from beginnings which, without being themselves either egoistic or altruistic, contain the physical conditions

¹ It is, however, not only in the *reproductive* instinct that we meet with a forecast of the "social" side of morality. The same is true of every instinct which leads to the performance of concerted and co-ordinate action by a group, *e.g.* the hunting of dogs.

of the development of both egotism and altruism, may arise through the ordinary workings of the psychological mechanism extreme types of life and conduct in which either form of moral action and feeling is all but utterly suppressed by the other. Such extreme types of one-sided development are, however, distinctly abnormal, and deserve to hold much the same place in the moralist's estimate of human character as "freaks" do in the naturalist's account of the physical world. In most men the two lines of moral development may probably be said to be about equally represented, our ordinary moral judgments have to be distorted and misrepresented in about an equal degree by those who wish to make them altogether an affair of self-realisation, and by those who can see in them nothing but the expression of sentiments of self-abnegation¹. Throughout the development of morality from its crudest beginnings to its highest culmination in the ethical and religious convictions of the best members of civilised society, we can trace precisely the same conflict of self-regarding and self-denying action as is prefigured in the non-moral world by the conflict between instincts which minister directly to the well-being of the adult animal and instincts which, at the cost of the adult, secure the protection of the yet immature generation, or that of the pack at the cost of the individual.

It will not be forgotten that we have already in our first chapter appealed to this dependence of morality upon the peculiar character of the animal instincts connected with our position as members of a species possessed of a special physiological organisation and developed under special physical conditions, to show the hopelessness of all attempts to construct a single ethical system for all "rational" beings. We have only to imagine to ourselves the existence of a community of intelligent creatures who, like the angels in heaven, neither marry nor are given in marriage, to realise how

¹ I may possibly be criticised for employing the much-decried term "altruism" as the counterpart to "egoism". I do not, of course, mean to suggest by my adoption of the term that a normal act of social beneficence may not also be at the same time an act of self-cultivation. I do, however, mean to suggest that you cannot *always* promote your own "good" by promoting that of society, or advance the interests of society best by attending to self culture. In a word, I mean to suggest the reality, on any intelligible theory of morality, of a self sacrifice which is more than self discipline.

completely the alteration of some of the physiological or even purely physical conditions of life would revolutionise ethics by changing the whole character of the conditions which determine the lines of demarcation between myself and others, and between the egoistic and the altruistic ethical developments¹

There is one point in the preceding discussion which is still, perhaps, in need of a word of explanation. We have more than once spoken of the "conflict" between two classes of instinct and two types of moral sentiment. Our language on this topic must not, of course, be understood to imply that every instinctive and every moral action must be either purely self-regarding or purely self-abnegatory. As a matter of fact, it is only in a certain minority of cases that the "conflict" has any existence. For the most part both instinctive and moral actions are at once beneficial to the individual and to the species. It is, of course, as necessary for the permanent existence of a species that the present adult generation should find adequate nourishment, and should be able to defend themselves successfully against their rivals in the struggle for life, as it is that the unborn or immature young should be fed and defended. And in the world of intelligent agents it is as necessary for the good of society that a man should make the best he can of himself as that he should assist his fellows to do the same. Hence, for the most part, the discharge of those instinctive actions which tend to the reproduction of the species and the nurture of the young is attended with pleasure to the individual performing them, and hence also in benefiting his fellows a man most often benefits himself, and *vice versa*. The object of our language about the conflict of instincts and of moral sentiments, was not to minimise the significance of so obvious a fact, but simply to insist that the harmony between the two sets of instincts or sentiments has its limits, and that we possess no general principle which would enable us to say that either set has a right to be regarded as more primary or more important than the other. To us it seems, indeed, no

¹ For instance, among the beings who, according to Mignon's song in *Wilhelm Meister*, "Fragen nicht nach Mann und Weib," sexual jealousy would be non-existent, and to what modifications of social arrangements would not this single circumstance give rise?

less sophistical to insist that the voluntary surrender of life on the field of battle is properly an act of self-realisation, than it would be to declare that the behaviour of the female bird who faces death in defence of her brood is an illustration of the strength of the self-preservative instincts. From first to last, from the lowest levels of instinctive to the most inaccessible heights of moral action, the conditions of life imposed upon the individual by the fact that he is at once a member and an instrument of his species, involve the constant possibility of conflicts which it seems impossible to obviate by any appeal to general principles. We shall have something to say about the features of this conflict between egoism and altruism, as it appears in the moral sentiments and practice of civilised mankind, in our chapters upon "The Types of Virtue" and on "The Goal of Ethics."

If the foregoing considerations are correct, we shall be justified in refusing to accept both the theory which resolves all morality into a cruder or more refined self-seeking, and the rival theory which regards it as essentially a matter of altruistic and "social" sentiment. We have been led to recognise, as present in the earliest and most inarticulate judgments of approbation and disapprobation, not, indeed, the full-blown sentiments of egoism and altruism, but the conditions requisite for the subsequent development of both. The existence in the primitive being of both self-preservative and reproductive and social instincts makes it inevitable that among the qualities and accomplishments approved of, even by the savage, there should be some which are more particularly productive of pleasurable experiences to their possessor, and others productive of pleasurable experiences to his family and his tribe, even at the expense of pain to himself. To write the further history of the growth of conscious self-seeking and self-denial would be to describe the gradual development of the concept of personality under the influences of family and tribal relations. The various influences of a social kind which assist the formation of this concept have frequently been so well described by psychologists and anthropologists that we may be excused from giving a detailed account of them in this place.

There is one misconception, however, which is so natural,

and is so often committed, that it may be as well to put the reader on his guard against it before we go any further. Great stress has very properly been laid of late years, by students of comparative morality, upon the important influence exercised first by tribal, and then by social opinion upon the formation of the individual's judgments of approbation and disapprobation and accompanying sentiments of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with his own conduct. Considered from the right point of view, indeed, the significance of tribal and social opinion for the growth of a personal morality can hardly be exaggerated. For the tribal or social opinion is naturally the great moral educator of mankind, and that in more ways than one. Not only does social opinion affect our own sentiments towards certain modes of behaviour by attaching to them rewards and punishments of a physical kind, it controls them still more effectually in virtue of that peculiarity of our physical and mental constitution, called sometimes by the name of "suggestion," sometimes by that of "sympathy," by which the physical expression of emotion on the part of other members of our species directly creates the corresponding expression, and with it the corresponding emotion, on our own part. In particular, the fact that it is from the older members of our own tribe or community that we have to borrow the very language in which to express our personal emotions and sentiments is of itself enough to invest tribal and social opinion with an almost omnipotent control over the formation of the moral sentiments and judgments of the individual.

These facts, however, are sometimes distorted into an argument for the extreme altruistic theory of ethics, according to which the only acts to which the specifically moral sentiments attach are acts of social service. It is assumed, rightly enough, that in general what the individual approves or disapproves will be what his society has previously approved or disapproved. It is further assumed, as I think falsely and unwarrantably, that what society approves must in the first place be only qualities and actions directly *serviceable* to itself as a whole. Hence, it is contended, morality from its very first appearance must, as a natural consequence of its dependence upon social opinion, consist entirely of conduct of

desired, were not continued existence, as a rule, pleasant. For the psychologist the all-important fact is the pleasantness, the connection of the pleasant with the beneficial, like its connection with the "useful," for him needs to be established by a synthetic judgment. Thus neither society nor the individual is restricted in its sentiments of approbation to qualities and properties known to be beneficial in the sense of being serviceable in securing continued existence. For ethics and psychology the ultimate fact is that certain qualities and properties are approved, it is for another science to investigate the general dependence of the instinctive likes and dislikes upon which approbation and disapprobation are founded on the conditions of organic existence.

The question which altruism is bound to answer thus takes the following form—Among the qualities which are directly and immediately approved by the tribe or society, are there any which have a value for their individual possessor independent of the services which they enable him to render to the community to which he belongs? If this question be answered in the affirmative, the purely altruistic position has been *ipso facto* abandoned. And it is fairly evident that the most natural answer to the question is the affirmative one. In the existence among even the most primitive of people of a standard of taste—that is, of an admiration for certain physical decorations conveying no special suggestion of health or muscular strength, we have striking evidence that the approbation of the primitive tribe was not bestowed solely upon qualities directly serviceable to its tribal interests. It is because primitive people have the standard of taste that the possession of a number of ornaments answering to that standard may become "beneficial" to the tribe, and not *vice versa*. And though strength, courage, and eloquence are all of them directly serviceable to the community, it seems unreasonable to deny that there is more in the popular admiration for a successful hunter or an eloquent speaker than the recognition of the useful services which his physical or mental endowments may perform to the community. If our view as to the "impersonal" nature of the simplest sentiments of approval and disapproval be correct, it is as natural for the community in general to take pleasure in the anticipation of the hunter's

good," while the feelings inspired in martial societies by the sight of physical weakness seem often to have been indistinguishable from the reprobation accorded to moral baseness

We feel bound, then, to reject the view according to which the tribal approval depended entirely upon a sense of the public benefit to be derived from the personal qualities of individuals.¹ We prefer to hold that, even apart from such influences, certain qualities, in consequence of the fundamental psycho-physical structure, are the objects of direct approbation on the part both of their possessor and of his fellow-tribesmen. At the same time we fully recognise the truth of all that has been urged as to the educational influences of tribal upon individual sentiment. We have just indicated an opinion that it is under the influence of this powerful force that a distinction is gradually made among qualities approved, such that while certain qualities of disposition and character which are specially beneficial to the community come to occupy the first place in the general esteem, those other qualities of physique and external endowment which were originally equally or even more admired, fall into the second rank, and are finally degraded to the position of mere "auxiliary" adjuncts to the qualities of character which are now regarded as specially "moral" and most eminently worthy of approbation. Hence we can readily join in the admission that, "apart from society," the individual would not be a moral being—not because we, like the altruists, find no qualities worthy of moral approbation but those which minister primarily to the social benefit, but because we recognise that, without society, moral education would be impossible.

If the question, "Could there be such a thing as morality for an individual apart from his society?" be taken literally, it is of course unmeaning. "Apart from society," the individual could not so much as be begotten and born, much less educated into morality. But when the extreme altruist goes on to assume that for an individual suddenly cut

¹ The statements in the text do not conflict with a view like that of Westermarck, according to whom the type of beauty admired by any people is approximately their own racial type, i. e. precisely that configuration which may be presumed to have had, under the circumstances, the greatest advantage in the struggle for existence. For we are now considering not the *de facto* connection between the "beautiful" and the "useful," but the subjective conditions under which "beauty" is apprehended by the individual. And we may be sure that the individual, unless he is a Socratic philosopher, does not base his verdict, "This is beautiful," on a previous judgment that "This is useful in the struggle for existence."

off from the society in which his moral education has been received and condemned to a life of total morality would seem to have some motives to be compelled to part company with him. If Robin in Chapter I, that declining have off to death could not give him the kind of experience of which he approves and for him in that on a different end of a pattern would then it could be said that morality has to be it up to him from the date of his "honesty" is to be with utterly related to a is capable of the state of mind experienced in such a situation. I have to have to be of my self yet, and I am not going to be in now, there remains the difference between a form of which he approves and for which he disapproves and which is to some extent a moral being. It might in fact be said with almost equal plausibility that one's intellectual growth is dependent on moral up or social environment. Robin in Chapter becomes a *type* in an action as he looks upon his first. It is, however, perfectly true that with long continued isolation from all social environment both intelligence and morality tend to die gradually out, as the unfortunate sailors revert more and more to the merely animal type. This however, only proves what we have already admitted, the importance of a social environment for all forms of mental life; it can therefore not be cited in support of the *learned* theory of one particular side of mental life. We shall pursue the subject of the inter-connection of personal or self-regarding and social morality in a later chapter on "The Types of Virtue."

We may now proceed to explain briefly the way in which some of the more important concepts employed by moralists in their description of the phenomena of the fully developed moral consciousness arise. The concepts we propose to discuss are those of *obligation, conscience, right and wrong, responsibility, moral personality, and merit*. Our account of these concepts will necessarily be very fragmentary and imperfect, yet we trust it will be sufficient to show, in its general outlines, the nature of the development by which the more complicated mental states denoted by these names arise from such simple approvals and disapprovals as we have hitherto been describing.

A great deal of mystery has been imagined by some moralists to surround the genesis of the sense of obligation and the allied

phenomena of conscience, but the matter, rightly apprehended, seems to be simple enough. Analysis will, I conceive, show three main stages in the formation of the peculiar complex emotional state commonly called the feeling of obligation, which we may for convenience' sake call the tribal, the theological, and the purely ethical stages, taking care, of course, to remember that these distinctions are not absolute, but represent simply typical aspects of a continuous evolution, and that the sense of obligation, as it actually exists in the mind of a civilised individual, may exhibit all three aspects at once

In dealing with the genesis of the sense of obligation, as in discussing the origin of the distinction between egoism and altruism, we have to begin by recognising the existence of a sort of preparatory process which cannot as yet be said to involve an actual feeling of obligation, though it is clearly tending in that direction. What the distinction between the two chief classes of instinct is to the distinction between egoism and altruism, the earliest dawnings of the feeling of self-dissatisfaction are to the full-grown feeling of obligation. Of dissatisfaction and its importance for the evolution of morality we have already in the course of the present chapter spoken in passing, but must now add a word or two more. Dissatisfaction is an emotional state which in its simplest form shows little trace of the educational influence of tribal or social opinion. Wherever you have—as from an early date in the life-history of every human being we have reason to believe we have—the ideal type of experience in its two primitive forms, memory and anticipation, the conditions are given for the feeling of dissatisfaction. That state of mind which, relatively to the future, or considered apart from time-relations, is disapprobation, is, relatively to the past, dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction, that is, arises wherever an experience belonging to the immediate past is at once remembered and strongly disapproved of, we may define it as emotion of a markedly unpleasant quality attaching to the ideal equivalent of immediately past experience. The very simplest example of such dissatisfaction might be sought in the “brooding” of the animal that has missed its prey, if only we could be quite certain that the animal has “ideas” at all. In default of such insight into the workings of the infra-human mind as

in some cases rewards, the less important, forming what we commonly call the social code, being left to be enforced simply by the exercise of public opinion. Neglect to behave in the way expected by the civil law is crime (or in minor cases misdemeanour), compliance with it, innocence, more generally compliance with the laws of public opinion, or, as Locke calls it, the law of reputation, is virtue, the violation of its injunctions vice. It is in this form of the recognition of certain performances as expected from us by our fellow-citizens that the sense of obligation most commonly appears in popular Greek moral philosophy, as represented, for instance, by the Socrates of Xenophon, and by many of the minor interlocutors in Plato.

Important modifications are introduced into this conception of the obligatory as the expected by the influence of religion. Recent students of primitive religion seem on the whole to incline to the view that morality and religion were originally unconnected with one another,¹ and that the close fusion between the two which to-day makes it appear self-evident to the average man that an immoral man cannot be really religious is a matter of comparatively late growth in the history of mankind. However that may be, it is at least certain that among all the peoples who have exercised an appreciable influence on the growth of modern civilisation, the gods have been regarded as so far at one with the fortunes of their worshippers as to have an interest in acting as patrons of the customary tribal morality, and as avengers of offences committed against it. Primarily this, of course, means no more than that the god expects the same performances as

¹ If the views urged with much force and ingenuity, as well as with copious learning, in the new edition of Mr Lang's *Myth, Ritual, and Religion* should ultimately find acceptance, the foregoing statement would have to be considerably modified. Mr Lang has certainly produced what looks like reasonable evidence of religious beliefs, from which tribal morality receives a supernatural support, even among such peoples as the Australians and the Andamanese, who are commonly supposed to possess no religious traditions beyond certain dull and dirty myths with no special bearing or morality (see *op cit* chaps ix and xii). The absence of anything like a religious element from the mysteries of the Central Australian tribes so fully described by Messrs Spencer and Gillen, on the other hand, appears to me to tell rather seriously against Mr Lang's view, so far as the Australians are concerned. And it seems questionable whether he has made sufficient allowance for the extent to which our accounts of the religions of higher barbarians (*eg* Aztecs, Incas) have been coloured by the imagination of Christian reporters. On this point the reader who has been brought up on Prescott and his Spanish authorities may consult with advantage E J Payne's *History of the New World*, vol 1.

public opinion expected and will avoid reward and punishment to the good of the community in order to enforce its demands on its members. Gradually, however, the effect of such theological instruction may be to lead to a better fixation of the conception of the character of the actions expected to be in line with the moral code put in effect, imposed by the religious community. It then continues, saying that the fact in members of the community is that in their power to inflict or bestow. Moreover, evidence of the fact which is often found in history is that moral teachers came to power, that the reward and punishment which they imposed appeared. Not only overt acts of evil, but also the intention of evil, but often the community itself, in the effort to enter upon a path to be taken, came into or left the community and a portion of the community led to be viewed with suspicion or bewilderment or other edifying. The effect of all these is inevitably to intensify the feeling of approbation and disapprobation with which the two forms of conduct are regarded, as well as to favour the recognition of inward disposition and intention as noble proper objects of the moral sentiment, then the outward conduct by which they are originally called into being.

But the influence of religion in transforming the primitive sense of what is expected into the civilized man's sense of duty does not end here. Religion has contributed largely not only towards substituting an inward morality of character and intention for a more egoistic morality of outward performance, it has also helped to widen the boundaries of the moral community. Originally the conduct that is "expected" is expected only by members of a small clan or group of clans from one another. Towards the alien who stands outside the special group to which you belong, you have, at this stage, no obligations, he expects nothing of you, and you in turn expect nothing of him.¹ The rules of customary conduct only apply within the limits of your own community, towards the outsider you are either indifferent or in the pre-"leviathan" condition of natural hostility. He is a beast from another pack, a black sheep in among the white ones. At first, of course, this exclusive attitude is also that of religion. Your god, like

¹ Cf. Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 102.

yourself, is a member of your own tribe, and has no interest in troubling himself with the affairs of a stranger. Jehovah, let us say, is the god of your tribe, and will reward or punish you according as you perform the services expected by Himself and by the human members of the clan, but the stranger belongs to a clan of which Chemosh is the patron, and Jehovah and Chemosh are old neighbours, and consequently secular enemies. You have, therefore, so long as you keep clear of the territories of Chemosh, no reason to anticipate unpleasant consequences from having dealt harshly with any of his clansmen¹

But the moment that your conception of the power and dignity of your god extends beyond these primitive limits, you are in a fair way to revise your notions of the extent of your moral obligations. As the tribal god becomes, whether under the influence of religious syncretism or of conquest, or from any other reason, first a national and then a universal god, he is thought of as the patron of a wider and wider society, and the notion of what he expects widens proportionately. The part played by religious syncretism in promoting the formation of international confederations in Hellas, and by the worship of the "genius of Cæsar" in creating a link between Roman and provincial in the Early Empire, the establishment of a common ethical and legal code, and the germs at least of a cosmopolitan "brotherhood of man," throughout the regions conquered by the arms and faith of Islam, the partial realisation in the Christian world of the apostle's ideal of a kingdom devoid of the distinctions of nationality, caste, and sex, are all examples of the way in which every increase in the power and dignity of a god carries with it a corresponding enlargement of the boundaries of the society he is supposed to protect²

It is thus that religious ideas have been largely responsible for the transition from a moral code which includes only duties towards the members of a small and exclusive circle to a moral code which embraces, as persons entitled to the performance of certain services, all mankind. The violation of an obligation enforced by the will of a deity is called *sin*, for the fulfilment

¹ Cf. Judges 21. 24, "Wilt thou not possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whosoever Jehovah our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess."

² Cf. also the transition, within the limits of Old Testament religion, from the narrow particularism of such a sentiment as "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth," to the broad universalism of the book of Jonah.

So long as moral obligation means simply "what is expected of me," whether by my fellow-men or by God, there is always a possibility that man or God may be induced by prayers, by bribes, or by mere personal likes or dislikes, to expect less of me in some particulars than of another person placed in the same position, or to accept unusual services in some one sort as an equivalent for shortcomings elsewhere. There is always at least the possibility of "compounding for sins that I'm inclined to by damning those I have no mind to." There is the possibility of persuading myself that I can make up for neglect of my obligations to my family or my customers by punctual attendance upon the public ceremonies of worship or by edifying acts of private contrition and devotion. This tendency is naturally fostered by the belief in rewards and punishments arbitrarily affixed by the choice of the Deity to particular forms of conduct. This belief in external sanctions always brings with it the danger that I may persuade myself that the remission of the penalty attached to neglect of my duties will place me in the same position as if I had performed them.

Hence it is, that with the growth of knowledge and reflection there inevitably arises that distinction of which we have already spoken between the ceremonial and the moral law. On the one hand, tradition asserts that the Deity expects from me certain services, largely of a personal kind, on the other, as my intercourse with human beings lying outside the pale of my religion becomes more frequent, and as the conditions of life become generally more complicated, I find myself strongly disapproving of behaviour towards my fellows which is not condemned, or is even enjoined, by the traditional religious code. According to the religious code, all such feelings of self-disapprobation or guilt should be removable by the performance of ceremonies believed to secure the goodwill of heaven, but, as a matter of fact, I find my dissatisfaction with my conduct persisting in spite of all that religion can do for me. This inner discord may even take the extreme form of an apparently irreconcilable conflict between my unwillingness to incur the heaviest penalties of divine wrath by acting counter to a distinct enactment of the religious code, and my equal unwillingness to assure myself of the rewards of divine favour

"Society expects this of me," partly "God will require this at my hands," partly "I cannot respect myself if I do not do this." The theologian in whom the sense of duty habitually takes the form of obedience to the divine will, and the philosopher in whom it wears the shape of reverence for a self-imposed law, are exceptional instances of men in whom the whole mass of moral convictions have developed *pari passu* and homogeneously, in the majority of practical men various parts of the whole mass will be found to have attained very different levels of logical evolution. "I ought to keep my word" perhaps means "I should despise myself if I lied" to the same man to whom "I ought to say my prayers" means "God expects it of me," and "I ought to stand by the privileges of my order," "My social circle will be offended if I don't." It is only the "ought" that means "I expect it of myself" which is the true and proper "ought" of specifically moral obligation. An action expected of myself is a moral *duty*, and the appropriate predicates which are used to describe acts which it is a moral duty to perform and avoid respectively are the words "*right*" and "*wrong*." With the recognition of a self-imposed law, according to which acts may be classed as *right* and *wrong*, the evolution of the sentiment and concept of obligation has reached its goal. Any attempt to transcend these distinctions takes us once more out of the sphere of morality into that of religion. How morality, after emancipating itself from the control of ceremonial religion, comes once more to fuse with art and science in a higher form of religion it will be our object to show in a later chapter. For the present we are concerned simply with the development of the *ethical* concepts and sentiments as such.

Our account of the evolution of the sentiment of obligation is virtually also an account of the genesis of *conscience*. Conscience only differs from the sense of obligation in being the product of a rather more developed process of reflection. Where obligation attaches to the single act, conscience is concerned rather with classes or systems of actions. Conscience, in fact, is simply a general name for the aggregate of a man's convictions as to what his obligations are. Again, in the term "obligation" we perhaps lay more stress on the emotional than on the intellectual factor in the complex sentiment or judg-

These are, no doubt, extreme cases, the requirements of ordinary life naturally beget in most of us a certain average all-round moral development, though, even so, every considerable section of society has its own distinctive peculiarities. The country gentleman's conscience is not that of the tradesman, nor the soldier's that of the lawyer. On a less striking scale members of the same social class may all find in themselves the same inequality of moral development in different directions. We may, in fact, apply to the case before us the excellent remark which Beneke has made about "faculties" in general¹. Each one of us has not one conscience, but an indefinite plurality of consciences, each with its own appropriate subject-matter and its own peculiar degree of sensibility.

To put the same thing in another way, we may say that the term "conscience" is the name given to a certain aggregate of "apperceptive" systems. As the persons and objects with which we have to deal in practical life naturally fall into a number of more or less detached groups, so the judgments as to our duty which are concerned with these various groups of persons and objects tend to fall into similar partly independent clusters. The judgments which concern one and the same group naturally "apperceive" one another, that is, by their reciprocal action upon one another, they readily coalesce into systems with a coherent and definite structure of their own, endowed with sufficient permanence to offer considerable resistance to modification from without, and we thus come in the end by a fairly fixed set of moral principles. In the consciousness of an ideal personage, such as the "wise man" of Aristotle, this process would be carried to its final completion, the systems formed in the manner already described would further proceed to assimilate and apperceive one another into a single and all-embracing scheme of life, in the actual world, however, this ideal is only imperfectly realised, there are always gaps and flaws in our practical as well as in our theoretical interpretation of the facts of life.

Taking "conscience," then, as a general name for a rather loose aggregate of partially independent sets of convictions and principles, we may further say that each of these subordinate systems of moral judgments (*e.g.* the average man's convictions

¹ *Lehrbuch der Psychologie*, § 11

about business honesty) is the final outcome of a process whereby a number of individual judgments of the same general type have coalesced into a single systematic whole, and the individual judgments out of which these systems have grown may easily be seen to be distinguished from other judgments by the common characteristic that they are all judgments of approbation and disapprobation—that is, judgments expressive of the feeling of pleasure or pain with which a certain course of action is contemplated in retrospect or in anticipation—judgments about the pleasure-pain character, not of events in the way of sense-experience, but of our memories and expectations of them. This description will, I think, be sufficient to show how closely conscience is connected with the sentiment of obligation, and how completely any analysis which throws light on the growth of the latter will dispel the clouds of mystery which have sometimes been thought to hang about the former. From our point of view there is, indeed, just as much or as little miracle and mystery about conscience as about any other complex phenomenon of fully developed mental life. The laws which preside over the development from the first primitive judgments of approbation and disapprobation of the elaborate system of obligations recognised by the consciences of civilised mankind are precisely those same laws of mental synthesis which govern the formation of all systems of universal judgments.

It is thus a complete psychological mistake to speak of the judgments of "conscience" as being in some way or other *sui generis*, and possessing a peculiar and incommunicable infallibility. They are only so far *sui generis* as any set of judgments concerning a special subject-matter may be said to be so. There is, of course, a wide generic difference between judgments expressive of our sentiments and preferences and judgments which merely record the observed facts of experience in abstraction from the feelings which the contemplation of them awakens. In respect of this general difference, the judgments of logic, ethics, and æsthetics may perhaps be said to be *generically* different from those of the natural sciences, and *generically* like one another. There is a logician's or philosopher's, and an artist's conscience, as well as a moral conscience. It is further possible to point out, as we ourselves shall try to

do in the sequel, certain characteristics by which the judgments of approbation which constitute the subject-matter of ethics differ from those closely allied judgments which are studied by æsthetics. The existence of such lesser distinctions, however, by no means effaces the family resemblance which all systems of judgments of approbation exhibit, as contrasted with judgments about merely "objective" facts. As we may have occasion to see in the course of our essay, the line of demarcation between those judgments of approbation which belong to ethics and those which belong to æsthetics is by no means rigidly fixed. Our decision as to what are questions of morality and what questions of mere "taste" will be found to be so largely a matter of mere convenience that there is much to be said for Herbart's treatment of ethics as a mere subordinate division of the wider science.

Nor does our analysis of the facts denoted vaguely by the term "conscience" justify the popular assertions about the infallibility of its judgments. To assert that conscience is infallible would be to say in other words that we never have good reason to modify our judgments of approbation or the sentiments which they express. This is, of course, infinitely far from being the fact. Every new discovery of the consequences to ourselves and to others of a line of conduct may possibly modify the feelings with which in future the idea of acting in that particular way is regarded. There is thus every opportunity for the almost unlimited modification of our judgments of approbation and disapprobation in the course of a long experience. The validity and authority of those judgments, like that of all other judgments, ultimately depends upon the degree to which we have succeeded in acquiring the means of passing a sound judgment. "Conscientious objections" of the kind so frequently appealed to by electioneering agitators of various kinds, or the strong prejudices of persons who have never availed themselves of the opportunity of forming a sound judgment as to the probable effects of their conduct, are really entitled to no more respect than any other set of ignorant prejudices. We might, indeed, fairly say no man has a right to a conscience in matters which he has not qualified himself to understand. At best the "infallibility of conscience" can only mean that at any one moment I know what I do

approve, it affords me no guarantee that, when I have learned by experience the consequences of acting in the way I approve, I shall still approve the same thing. The extent to which my conscientious convictions are in this latter sense "infallible," and the extent to which my approbation and disapprobation are a matter of permanent system and coherent principle, depends upon the extent to which I can succeed in informing myself about the bearing of the particular act upon my own life and the lives of others as a whole, and this is a kind of information which can only be obtained by long and careful study of the physical and social conditions of human existence.

Responsibility is a concept the development of which clearly runs parallel to that of obligation. Psychologically the main difference between the sense of responsibility and the sense of obligation would seem to be that where the latter implies a reference to the future the former carries a conscious reference to the past. I feel the "obligation" to perform an action when I at once contemplate it as a thing yet to be done and as a thing expected from me. I feel "responsible" when I remember an act as already done, and know at the same time that it was not what was "expected." Responsibility may thus be said to be the other side of obligation, and like obligation to appear successively in three main forms as general intelligence advances. I am primarily responsible to my tribesmen, who will visit their displeasure upon me when I fail to behave in the way they expect of me. In a more complex form of society than the primitive tribe or clan, this responsibility appears partly as actual accountability to the legal tribunals of the state, partly as liability to the censure of "public opinion." Or again I am responsible for the performance of the conduct expected of me to that unseen and superhuman member and patron of the tribe who has exceptional powers of observing delinquencies that pass unnoticed by other eyes, and exceptional facilities for avenging them. I am responsible to God (or more generally to the "supernatural," "the ancestral spirits," etc.) for the conduct He demands of me. All that has been said about the way in which theological conceptions widen the scope of obligation, while at the same time bringing the secret intention into equal importance with the overt act, will, of course, apply

with equal force to the influence of religion upon the sense of responsibility. To God I am responsible for thoughts and purposes as well as for words and actions, and for my behaviour towards all mankind as well as towards my townsmen and countrymen. Finally, when the evolution of ethical sentiment is complete, I am responsible to myself for obedience to a law which I impose on myself, for the discharge of duties which I expect from myself, and should continue to expect, though God and man were to agree to connive at my disregard of them.

It is clear, then, that responsibility, like obligation, with which it is so intimately connected, implies the existence of the "ideal" forms of mental life, memory and anticipation, and that a being possessed only of sensations could not possibly feel itself responsible. If any one likes to apply the term "personality" to such rudimentary selfhood as is implied in the simplest memories and expectations, he will then be justified in saying none but persons are responsible. Such relatively clear consciousness of personality, however, as is enjoyed by the civilised adult does not precede, but rather springs from a sense of responsibility. It is through being treated as responsible and thus made to feel my continuity with my own past that I come to be truly a "person." The juristic and casuistic questions about responsibility for acts done under intoxication, in temporary insanity, etc., are interesting as serving to show how vague our ideas about personality are, but do not concern us here.

It remains to add a few words of explanation about the most difficult and complex, which is also historically the most recently acquired of the principal ethical concepts—the concept of moral personality. To some readers it will perhaps seem strange that we should have spent so much time in discussing obligation, conscience, and responsibility, without having as yet dealt with what is regarded by a numerous and distinguished school of moralists as the central and fundamental concept of ethics. Our reason for adopting this order of treatment is in truth a very simple one, and it is this. It is demonstrable matter of history that the full sense of personality is a later and more complex product of psychical evolution than the simpler forms, at any rate, of ethical practice and

theory The works of Plato and Aristotle are by themselves a striking proof that men knew what was meant by duty and the good and conscience and the rest of the ethical concepts long before they had conceived the elaborate hypotheses about their mental nature which give the modern word "person" its meaning¹ For the psychologist it is a fact, the significance of which can hardly be overrated, that Greek philosophy ran its course from its dawn in the crude physical speculation of Thales to its Alexandrian sunset without ever inventing any technical term corresponding to our category of "personality"

Nor does it seem that the loss was altogether on the side of Greek philosophy. When one comes to ask after the exact meaning of the word "person," one finds one's self lost in a mixture of vague metaphysics, with, if possible, vaguer psychology. Apart from metaphysical assumptions, which have been on principle excluded from our statement of the empirical facts of ethics, it seems impossible to say exactly how much or how little mental continuity is requisite to constitute personality or personal identity, unless you specify more particularly the purposes for which you desire to define the terms² Personality clearly means some sort of conscious mental continuity, but it seems in vain to ask how much. Are the higher animals in a rudimentary way persons? Is a child of tender years a person? Can the fragmentary experiences of my dreams be said to belong to the life of a person? If so, do they belong to *my* personal life? What degree of solution of mental continuity brought by disease, accident, etc., would amount to alteration, and what further degree to suppression of personality? These are questions which every one can ask, but no one can answer with certainty and precision. Your answer to any one of them depends upon the amount of conscious mental continuity you mean to include in your definition of "personality," and there seems to be no better reason for adopting a high or low standard in the matter than the taste

¹ For instance, the performance of actions *ἐνεκα τοῦ ἀλλοῦ* so strongly insisted upon by Aristotle is exactly what we mean by obedience to a sense of duty or obligation, the virtuous *προαίρεσις* and the conflict in the mind of the *ἀκράτης* between this and his momentary desires describe the same psychological facts as are covered by our notion of "conscience" and "remorse," and the distinction between "voluntary" and "involuntary" acts corresponds exactly to that which would be drawn to day between the deeds for which we are, and those for which we are not "responsible."

² See the discussion in *Appearance and Reality*, chap. ix, from which what follows is drawn

and fancy of the individual psychologist. If we are to have a definite answer to the question, "How *much* is requisite to constitute personality?" we must first of all know what kind of personality is meant. If you mean *legal* personality, the line will have to be drawn in one place, if you mean *moral* personality, it may be best to draw it in another, it is all a question of degrees.

In fact, the question, "When has a continuous stream of mental life sufficient individuality to make it a person?" is exactly like the equally unanswerable question, "When is a quantity of matter one thing?" neither can be answered unless you know the purpose for which the definition is required. If we want to know what is moral personality we must, then, first of all appeal to common pre-scientific language to tell us what kind of beings are actually recognised as moral persons. If we can once be clear in a general way as to what sort of mental existence is clearly recognised as personal, for the purposes of our ordinary moral judgments, we may succeed in discovering what peculiar psychological qualifications go to constitute moral personality. Now, as a matter of fact, we never regard any creatures as persons, in the special sense attached by ethics to the word, except those who are at any rate in some degree "responsible" for their actions. When, in a famous criminal trial some few years ago, a child of three was described by one of the witnesses as a "person of unusual determination," there was probably no spectator in the Court and no reader of the reports of the case who did not feel the phrase to be a ridiculous abuse of language. In another connection the application of the word "person" to a mere baby might perhaps have been allowed to pass unchallenged, but where the question was one of personal *character*, it could not but appear strangely out of place. And in all probability the universal answer to the question *why* a child of three should not be called a person would have been, "Because persons are responsible for their actions and babies are not." Popular language marks the same feeling of the distinction between babies and "persons" by its instinctive tendency to substitute, to the mortal offence of admiring mothers and nurses, the neuter for the properly personal pronouns in speaking of them and their belongings.

Moral personality, then, is founded upon "responsibility," and implies at least as much mental continuity as we have seen to be necessary for the genesis of the sense of responsibility. No being has even the rudiments of moral personality who does not possess enough mental continuity to remember its own past and anticipate its own future actions. But the degrees to which any creature retains the memories of its past actions and anticipates its future actions may be almost infinitely various. In the early stages of child-life it may be that only the immediate past and the immediate future are remembered and anticipated. The events of a few days or even hours ago have faded into irreparable oblivion, or at least, if recalled at all, seem so far away as to be no more real than a dream, the events of next week are as little imagined and expected beforehand as the events of the next century or of the next life¹. In adult life, on the other hand, there may be a vast stock of orderly and systematised memories reaching back from the just vanishing moment to the dim and distant years of early childhood, and an equally systematic stock of plans and anticipations embracing a future that has to be measured by decades, or even by centuries. It is clear that along with the general intellectual growth indicated by this advance in memory and anticipation there must go a corresponding increase in capacity to recollect the marks of approbation and disapprobation with which various forms of conduct have been received in the past, and to anticipate the way in which they are likely to be received in the future. Whatever circumstances make generally for an increase in power to remember and anticipate will thus make, in the absence of any special counteracting influences, for the development of the sense of responsibility and the consciousness of moral personality.

Moral personality, then, is not a fixed psychological condition which emerges once and for all at a certain point in our mental history. It is normally in a state of constant progressive development from the first dawn of intelligence in early childhood to its culmination in the years of intellectual maturity. To be in the fullest and highest sense a moral personality is the same thing as to be a man of fixed principles.

¹ Cf. Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 264. "An Australian native never looks far enough ahead to consider what will be the effect on the food supply in future years if he allows a particular child to live."

and formed character. It is, in other words, to have reached a pitch of mental development at which memory and the sense of responsibility go back to the furthest past, and anticipation and the sense of obligation reach forward to the most distant future events of life. Just in so far as this continuity of the experienced present with the past and the future is actually realised in our consciousness are we truly moral *persons* in the sense demanded by ethics.

Personality in the moral sense is thus simply the systematised form of what, in its simpler beginnings, we call the sense of obligation and responsibility. If, then, some rudimentary personality, so much at least as is implied in the simplest sense of responsibility for the immediate past, and obligation in the immediate future, be present in even the earliest forms of ethical action and feeling, full and complete moral personality is itself not an original endowment, but one of the latest acquisitions of individual and race. It is a prime moral duty to become a person, just because you are not already one¹. The flighty, irresponsible beings of the "Harold Skimpole" type, who, by education or disposition, are incapable of bearing in mind the responsibilities contracted a day ago or making provision to meet the calls of the morrow, are not so much bad and immoral persons as creatures who, whether through their own fault or not, are not in the true ethical sense persons at all. The current phrase, "an overgrown child," describes their mental condition with strict scientific accuracy.

It is not my purpose in this connection to write an elaborate history of the steps by which full moral personality develops out of the simplest sense of responsibility to the tribe or neighbours for an individual act. For the complete description of the development we should require—(1) an account of the general laws regulating the formation of interconnected systems of universal judgments and the concepts in which the results of these judgments are summarised, (2) and in particular, a theory of the formation of that set

¹ Of course one can fall back upon the distinction (well called by Bacon "*frigida distinctio*") between *actus* and *potentia*, and say every human being is, even in infancy (or before?) *potentially* a person. But has any problem ever really been solved to the satisfaction of an unbiassed mind, by the introduction of a mere verbal antithesis of this kind? What is "potentiality"? and is not everything "potentially" most other things, when one comes to think of it?

the concept of moral personality which claims at our hands something more than a reference to the standard works on psychology, as it exercises a singularly potent influence upon the character of the primitive ethical notions themselves. We have already said that originally the predicates "good" and "bad," which express the primary ethical sentiments of approval and disapproval, can be and are applied to the widest variety of objects. Originally, as the evidence of language as well as of child psychology shows, qualities of things and qualities of persons, qualities of body and qualities of mind, are all alike described as "good" and "bad" respectively, according as the contemplation of them is pleasing or painful. The child who flogs in his anger the table against which he has knocked his head, the savage who whips or breaks his idol when the results of his worship are unsatisfactory, has the habit, as we loosely say, of "personifying" everything, or rather, as we might more accurately express ourselves, has not learned to draw the distinctions betokened by the use of the terms "person" and "thing", for him the behaviour of things and the behaviour of persons stand ethically on the same level. The adult civilised mind, on the other hand, in spite of occasional relapses into the attitude of childhood under the influence of momentary passion,¹ habitually draws an immense distinction between the qualities and behaviour of things and those of persons. Things, he holds, are not "good" or "bad" in the full moral sense of the words, *moral* goodness belongs only to persons. And, even among the actions and qualities of persons, the fully civilised mind draws a further and less clear distinction between those which are, properly speaking, morally good or bad, and those which are not. The distinction seems to rest on no very assured psychological foundation, and the moment you try to find any fixed principle about it you get into confusion, but the fact of its existence is undeniable. Roughly speaking, the civilised mind, consistently or not, holds that the physical qualities of persons, and such of their actions as are done either under compulsion or in unavoidable ignorance of the circumstances, are "indifferent", it is only psychical

¹ Compare also the state of mind revealed by the Athenian practice of trying the weapon with which the ox was killed at the Dipolia, and the numerous mediæval trials of animals

of both persons and things alike, should by civilised men now be used primarily of persons only, and only in a secondary sense of things

(1) One of the earliest differences to be perceived between things and persons is, that things never show any signs of disapproving or approving our behaviour to them. A child must very early in his life discover that persons expect certain behaviour of him, and express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction in various ways, while things do nothing of the sort. Men and women take the child's offered sweetmeats, they smile with pleasure and say, "Good boy", the table or chair does nothing of the kind. Men and animals, again, sometimes hit back if you strike or scratch them, you may flog the table as long as you like without provoking any retort. These facts are commonly and rightly insisted upon by the psychologist as the source of our notions of activity and causation, ethics is also interested in them as affording the basis for still earlier and simpler mental discoveries. A child is enabled by experiences of this kind, even before he possesses any intelligible theories about causation, to discover that it is the behaviour of men and animals, and not that of tables and chairs, that is of primary importance to him, his attention is taken up and his emotions aroused much more by the things that expect certain behaviour from him than by those that do not, and this of itself would sufficiently explain why it is that the judgment of approbation and disapprobation soon comes to be concerned principally, if not exclusively, with the actions of persons and not with the qualities of things. It is the behaviour of persons that to an ever-increasing extent has the main significance for our emotional life.

(2) There is also an almost more striking difference between persons and things which a child would probably soon discover for himself, even if his elders did not take the pains they do to impress it upon him. The thing, as the child soon finds, cannot move itself, if it is to be the means of exciting a change in his emotions, it must be made so by the intervention of a person. For instance, if his toy is broken, it is to father or mother that he goes to have it mended, if the table hurts him when he runs against it, he is shown how by taking more heed to his steps he might have

escaped the accident. If he tries to move a heavy object in order to get at something that he wants, and pulls it down upon himself, he is told that he should have asked some one to lift it for him. All through his life in the nursery, experience is teaching him that it depends in almost every case on some piece of behaviour on the part of himself or some other member of the family, whether the qualities of the things round him shall be productive of pleasure or of pain to him. The lesson he is thus learning is commonly said to be that things have no power of action, or that activity belongs only to persons. It may be expressed without introducing the obscure metaphysical implications of the term "activity" in the following form. All through childhood we are busy learning that our physical environment is of only secondary importance in its influence on our happiness in comparison with our social environment. The higher the grade of civilisation attained by the society into which a child is born, the more completely is this subjection of physical to social environment an accomplished fact, and the earlier and more thoroughly the lesson is learned.

Putting aside all metaphysical theories of causation, it is increasingly true, as civilisation advances, that persons can help themselves and things cannot. On every occasion when the child in the nursery is shown how he may escape being hurt by things by taking care not to run into them, or by asking the help of his elders, on every occasion on which his interest is awakened in a new toy by being shown how to "make it work," he is learning that the character of our experiences depends primarily upon the behaviour of persons, and only in a very secondary degree upon the qualities of things. Thus, while still in the nursery, the child of a civilised race comes to connect his pleasant and his painful memories and anticipations above all things with persons and their doings. It is therefore not at all to be wondered at that it is to persons and their actions that he specially applies the predicates "good" and "bad," when he learns to use them as expressive of his sentiments of approbation and disapprobation. It is not because the ethical sentiments "do not belong to the pleasure-pain series," but because our pleasures and pains are infinitely more dependent upon the behaviour of persons than upon the qualities of

things, that we come by a very natural process to apply the ethical predicates all but exclusively to persons and the actions of persons, and to feel that things are "good" or "bad" only in a secondary sense

The same lesson of the overwhelmingly preponderating importance of the social over the physical environment, which the child born into a civilised family has every facility for learning promptly and easily, would in the ordinary course of experience be slowly and painfully mastered by the primitive community. Men who at first attributed the failure of their shot to the "badness" of the bow, would gradually learn how, by selecting the right kind of wood and fibre, etc., the accidents they found so unpleasant might be avoided. From the moment this lesson was learned, it would be the persons responsible for the selection of the wood, and not the wood itself, around whom the feelings which find vent in the judgment "good" or "bad" would centre, what had once led to an expression of disgust with the bad bow would now inspire a judgment of censure on the maker. It is precisely those things which are so little known to us or so far away from us that we cannot discover any way of influencing their behaviour by our own—the volcano, the sea, the wind—around which the ethical predicates and the sentiments they express continue to cling long after men have come in general to transfer their approbation and disapprobation from the thing to the person by whose conduct it can be made available either for pleasure or for pain. And it is, of course, also precisely these great inaccessible constituents in our physical environment which determine the limits within which our happiness or unhappiness can be made, by advancing civilisation to depend upon the social environment, to the exclusion of everything else. Scientific progress has enabled us to be very largely indifferent to changes in the mere physical environment, but it has not as yet discovered a substitute for the sun or an antidote against an earthquake. Hence, even in civilised society, there still lingers a sense of the "beneficence" of the central body of our system and the "spite of nature" that permits a great volcanic eruption or a deadly earthquake¹. Note that the

¹ For an interesting example of the way in which these primitive ethical sentiments can linger on even in the most philosophic mind read the curious footnote in Bosanquet's *Logic*, ii 218. It is a mistake to speak of such judgments as if they

process described is accelerated by our instinctive special *interest* in (1) things that move, (2) and of thing that move in our own space. Hence the distinction is drawn even more early than was suggested above.

These reflections will, I trust, remove any difficulties which might otherwise be felt about our derivation of moral predicates from a form of sentiment originally aroused by many other kinds of personal quality. As the recognition of mental continuity and the supreme importance of the actions of persons becomes increasingly clear, it becomes possible to regard any single act as only one instance of a general habit of acting in a particular way displayed by the agent on numerous and repeated occasions. It thus becomes possible to pass judgment of approbation and disapprobation not merely on individual acts, but upon whole series of acts, upon habits and way of life. At the same time, various influences, probably most of all such religious influences as have been already mentioned in this connection, lead to the recognition of intention and feeling by the side of overt action as proper objects of approval and disapproval. By this means a comparison of complete lives and characters in respect of moral goodness and badness is rendered possible. The estimated moral goodness of a life or character as a whole is called its *merit*¹. The concept of *merit* (in the case of negative merit, *demerit*) has presumably passed through much the same stages as those of *obligation* and *responsibility*. My *merit* means primarily the tokens of approbation I receive from the society to which I belong, then tokens of divine approbation, finally, the degree of approbation with which I myself, or another comparing my character as a whole with a recognised standard of obligation, is constrained to regard it. The merit of a single act can only be estimated when it is considered in connection with the whole life and character of which it forms part.

Merit, as expressing the ethical judgment upon a completed life or character, is the most highly complex concept,

arose from a "personification" of natural objects, they are remains of a primitive stage of feeling at which the ethical predicates had not got themselves specially attached to "personal" objects.

¹ *N.B.*—It is identical with the *αἰσία* of which Aristotle speaks as the standard of equality in "distributive" justice.

and the last word of ethics. There remains, it is true, a point of view at which it ceases to be appropriate to express either approbation or disapprobation of character, viewed in relation to the whole universe of which it forms a part, one life may be said to be just as essential to the whole scheme and just as much in its proper place as any other, since all alike, each in its way, display the characteristic attributes of the whole, and none could be suppressed without mutilation of the system to which all belong. This is the view of science, which finds in the universe nothing to praise or blame, but only things to understand, and of evangelical religion, which sees in the destination of some vessels to honour and others to dishonour the same free grace and disposition of God. Whatever may be said for such an attitude—and we shall see in a later chapter that there is a great deal to be said for it—it is not that of ethics. In leaving behind us the final expression of human approbation and disapprobation in our estimate of man's merit and demerit, we are passing out of the realm of ethics. If the concept of "merit" will not adequately express the full truth about human actions, then ethics must renounce all pretensions to being a body of ultimate metaphysical truths.

The contents of the last few pages, and in particular the remarks on *merit* and *demerit* with which they closed, will have made it clear that a systematic account of the ethical sentiments, as they exist in the civilised community, must take the form of a theory of values. Every judgment of approbation may be called, with respect to its attitude towards the object approved, a judgment of relative *worth*. Hence ethics has in modern times frequently and rightly been called a science of values or worth. If we have not ourselves hitherto used this expression, the reason has been simply a desire to guard against the metaphysical implications that might to some minds seem to lurk in the use of the word "worth". Now that we have offered an entirely empirical account of the formation and meaning of the principal ethical concepts, we may perhaps, before bringing a lengthy chapter to the close for which both reader and writer are longing, make a few remarks about worth or value in general, in order more completely to divest the terms of any ulterior metaphysical significance.

more "valuable" than another because it is less rapidly consumed in the process of enjoyment, and thus may be made to yield pleasure not once merely, but repeatedly, and as a comparative permanency Plato would have said, and I think justly, that it is for this among other reasons that the satisfactions of the intellect are "better" or more "real" or "worthy" than those of the belly¹ You cannot, says the proverb, eat your cake and have it too, but the food of the mind and soul, like the sacramental elements, is "eaten and not consumed"

And again, there are some things which will give us satisfaction only under special and by no means always existing psycho-physical conditions, and there are yet others from which we derive unfailing enjoyment in all the changing conditions of life Meat can only be enjoyed when you are hungry and drink when you are thirsty, but the man of ethical or religious conviction enjoys the approval of conscience or the peace which passeth understanding alike in riches and in poverty, in fullness and in hunger, in freedom and in bonds, in health and in sickness And there are experiences, in themselves momentary, the remembrance of which is attended with constant satisfaction, while for an anticipated renewal of them one would face a lifetime of pain and obloquy Manifestly, then, more value must be ascribed to the things which give us so unconditional a pleasure than to those which by a slight psychical or physical modification of the organism may become objects of disgust and loathing²

Thus, by attention to these two characteristics, permanence of enjoyment and unconditionality of enjoyment, we may readily construct on purely empirical principles a table of values, and we may even explain the ascription of the first place in the table to those qualities of moral and religious character which no freak of external fortune can take away from us But every "value" in the table, from the "absolute worth" of moral character down to the "worth" of the most momentary gratification of animal appetite, is purely "relative" to the peculiar psycho-physical constitution of the human

¹ *Republic*, 585

² Though it must not be forgotten that the *amantium irae* are not unknown in the religious world, and that there, as elsewhere, they do not always end in the proverbial way

also the "valuable" and "worthless" mean simply the things that do and that do not yield satisfaction to men. The only difference between the "absolute" worth of character and the relative worth of wealth or beauty is that the wants satisfied by morality are more universally felt and more constantly recurring than any others. The craving for truth or beauty is confined, even in civilised society, to a select few, society in general could subsist without philosophers or painters—it could not subsist without the attainment by the vast majority of its members of a certain level of moral sentiment. And, again, a man may be happy in ignorance, or even in poverty, but—so moralists at least assume—few men could be permanently contented with a life of successful villainy. The art of morality is the one art in which, to paraphrase the expressions of the Platonic *Protagoras*, no one can afford to be an amateur.¹ The worth of morality, then, is "absolute" only so long as the existence of the general conditions of civilised human life is tacitly taken for granted, it is "absolute" in the sense that the cravings satisfied by moral institutions and habits are such as are inseparable from the existence of intelligent beings with the constitution and environment of mankind, whereas those which give scientific or æsthetic experiences their value are peculiar to a few individuals of exceptional physical and psychical constitution. If all mankind had the scientific or the artistic disposition, it is clear that our judgment of the relative worth of moral and other attainments might be indefinitely modified. Thus there is nothing in the proposition that ethics is a theory of values which really militates against our claim that ethics is a purely empirical science. It is for empirical psychology to say what qualities are and what are not of "absolute" worth for human beings.²

The reader will perhaps have missed in the foregoing account of the ethical sentiments the terms "desire" and

¹ Plato, *Protagoras*, 322 c d

² It is necessary to note that it is *not pleasure*, but *satisfaction*, by which the "worth" of a thing is measured. "Worth" or "value" only belongs to things in so far as they come up to certain pre existing standards or satisfy certain pre existing cravings. Hence the only creatures for whom experiences can be said to have worth are those who possess the ideal forms of psychical life, memory and anticipation. Hence also an experience which, though pleasurable, is in no respect a fulfilment of an anticipation, a realisation of an idea, cannot properly be said to have worth.

"will," which usually occupy so prominent a place in ethical discussions. We have spoken frequently of the pleasurable or painful anticipation of an experience, but have hardly mentioned the desiring or the willing of an experience. The absence of these expressions from our analysis has, of course, been intentional. Our object in avoiding them was to indicate our agreement with those psychologists who refuse to recognise "conation" as an original and unanalysable feature of experience by the side of cognition and feeling. As the "tripartite" analysis of experience into the aspects of cognition, feeling, and conation, though discarded by more than one eminent authority among recent psychologists, is still perhaps generally accepted, it is only right that we should briefly explain our reasons for dissatisfaction with it, and should indicate how the phenomena of "desire" and "will" are described in our own terminology. Our objection to the recognition of "conation" as equally primitive with cognition and feeling is, briefly, that all the phenomena described by the term, in so far as they belong to psychology at all, seem analysable into elements of cognition and feeling, and further, that "conation," as customarily described, seems to include something which is strictly speaking not psychological.

This will become clear if we consider any simple case of what is commonly known as "desire." In the simplest desires psychological analysis will show the presence of the two elements which we have regarded as essential to a "sentiment," the expectation of certain experiences and a feeling of pleasure or pain accompanying this expectation. So far, all that has happened is manifestly capable of description in terms of cognition and emotion alone. Where, then, does the new mental element, "conation" come into the process? Apparently, according to the believers in the "tripartite" character of mind, with the execution of movements adapted towards securing the experiences which are anticipated with pleasure or avoiding those anticipated with pain. It is the fact that anticipations lead to movements which have begotten the belief in "conation" as distinct from feeling and cognition. But "movement," from the strictly psychological point of view, is itself nothing but a succession of complex sensations—of sight, pressure, contact, etc.—accompanied by changes of feeling-tone.

For the physicist or the physiologist, of course, motion means something very different from a succession of sensations and feelings, but motion in the physicist's or physiologist's sense is not movement as actually experienced, but a mere abstraction from experience, a mere partial representation of a part of the full concrete experienced event. For the physicist motion means change of position, *i.e.* some part of what we *see* when we watch the movement of our limbs or of external objects, for the physiologist the movement of a limb is a matter of muscular contractions, *i.e.* once more something which, under certain conditions of experiment, we may see, but of which the infant beginning to move his limbs is profoundly ignorant, and would remain ignorant all his life long if there were no physiologists to enlighten him. If once we, as psychologists, free our notions of experienced movement from associations derived from physical and physiological sources, and confine ourselves to the description of what is actually perceived when a limb is moved, there seems to remain nothing but what can be successfully resolved into cognitive and emotional elements.

Stated in strictly psychological language, apart from physiological implications, the facts about "conation" are these. The pleasurable or painful expectations of certain experiences is regularly followed by a series of complex sensational and emotional states of a special kind (kinæsthetic sensations). Throughout the series thus set up the emotional tension arising from the conflict between the feelings awakened by the anticipation and those awakened by its continuance in the merely "ideal" form is constantly changing. In a case of successful "conation" the direction of the change is throughout negative, the emotional tension steadily decreases, until at last a final state is reached in which it becomes zero as the anticipated experience is actually enjoyed, in the case of pleasurable anticipation, or finally ceases to be anticipated, in the case of unpleasant anticipation. In an unsuccessful "conation" the process is of a more complicated kind. The emotional tension characteristic of the state of expectancy or anticipation does not in this case steadily diminish as the series of kinæsthetic experiences proceeds, but varies irregularly, now in the positive, now in the negative direction, and the final stage of the whole process is marked by the merging of the tension, not in the

pleasurable feelings which attend the fruition of anticipated satisfaction or the escape from anticipated harm, but in the intensely unpleasant feelings of disappointment and fatigue

The above account represents, I think, pretty fairly the nature of successful and unsuccessful "conation," considered from the purely psychological point of view. By the aid of physiology we are enabled to complete our account of the whole psycho-physical process of desire by adding to what we have already said the consideration that the series of kinæsthetic sensations is, on the physiological side, identical, or if you prefer it, "concurrent," with the discharge of movements which are at first of a random kind, but become in the course of repetition more systematic and co-ordinated, and have throughout for their consequence the retention or repetition of an agreeable and the removal of a disagreeable stimulus. The process by which the random passes gradually over into the definite purposive movement may be described on the physiological side as one of formation of association paths in the higher nervous centres, on the psychological as one of formation of associations between the ideas of certain experiences in the way of the special sensations and certain other "kinæsthetic" ideas, which we know, though not from psychology, to be connected with the contractions of certain groups of muscles. There is, as I conceive, no case of desire and consequent movement adapted to secure the desired object that cannot be adequately represented, both on the physical and the psychical sides, by an account like the one just given, couched in terms, on the one hand, of ideas and feelings, and, on the other, of muscular contractions. The introduction of a special and peculiar aspect of mental life called "conation" into the psychology of desire seems therefore superfluous. If "conation" is something psychical, it will be identical with the peculiar combination of kinæsthetic sensations with varying emotional tension described above. If it is something more than this, it is apparently identical with muscular contraction, and is thus purely physiological.

Such a state of emotional tension or "craving" as we have described is itself a "desire" in the process of passing over into action. We may, if we like, retain the name "conation" to mark the fact that a strongly-toned anticipation regularly sets up such a sense of kinæsthetic experiences as we have

described, only in that case we must take notice that we are denoting by "conation" not a third and peculiar aspect of mental life distinct in kind from feeling and cognition, but a law regulating the formation of series of cognitive-emotional states. Adopting the convenient phraseology of Avenarius, we may say that every impulsive action may be represented as a "vital series," in which we may distinguish an initial, a median, and a final stage. Disregarding, for purposes of simplification, all forms of impulsive action except that in which the result attained is the realisation of a pleasurable anticipation, we may further describe the three stages of such a series as follows. The series opens with an initial stage in which vital equilibrium is disturbed by the emotional tension arising from the contrast between the pleasure of the anticipation and the unpleasantness of its non-realisation (the craving or desire proper), in the median stage of the process we have a succession of kinæsthetic states, accompanied by a steady diminution of the emotional tension and an increase of pleasant feeling, in the final stage the experience symbolised by the idea with which the series opened is realised, the emotional tension becomes zero, and the emotional tone consequently one of pure pleasure. Thus with the disappearance of the mental tension of anticipation equilibrium is once more restored, and the "vital series" comes to its close. Now in this "vital series" each term can, on its psychical side, be adequately represented as a combination of presentational with emotional (*i.e.* with pleasure-pain) elements, it is not in the character of the individual terms of the series, but in the *form* of the series as a whole, that the distinguishing marks of "conation" are to be found.

If, then, there is anything in the conative experience that cannot be analysed into sensation, idea, and emotion, this *tertium quid* must be something that is not to be found in the simpler forms of desire and consequent impulsive action, but only in the more developed forms of will and action from choice. If we are to accept the "tripartite" division of psychical phenomena, we ought to be able to show that in the adult human consciousness there is, between the desire or the examination of the alternative possibilities and the execution of the action decided upon, some stage interposed

which cannot be described in terms of cognitive or emotional process. We ought to be able to say with Prof. or Lidd in his recently published *Outline of Descriptive Psychology* that the mental state expressed by the words "I will it," "it is my resolve," is so absolutely *non-cognitive* that it cannot possibly be represented in the term which we have found adequate for the description of mere craving and mere impulsive action. Whether the fact is a Prof. or Lidd asserts is a matter upon which each of us must decide for him. If after careful introspection, for my own part, I fail to find in my mental condition at the moment of forming a resolution anything which cannot be satisfactorily analysed into element of a cognitive and of an emotional kind.

The state of mind commonly expressed by such phrases as "I'll do it" seems to be no more than the change of emotional direction and intensity and the corresponding change in organic sensation, effected by the transition from a state of mental conflict to one of such steady and continuous diminution of emotional tension as we have described in our analysis of the simple forms of impulsive action. The ideas of mutually exclusive courses of action have previously been alternately occupying the "centre of consciousness," and, by then alternating, have produced that very unpleasant irregular variation in the quality and intensity of the accompanying emotions which is characteristic of the state of "doubt" or "uncertainty", now one of the alternatives is clearly present to the exclusion of the other, and becomes the first stage of such a "vital series" as we have already described. It is the feeling of relief, characteristic of this psychical change, which gives to the state expressed in the words "I'll do it" its special colouring. The introduction into the psychological analysis of this process of a new aspect of mental life seems to be a confusion due either to reminiscences of physiology or to metaphysical theories of "activity," or to both. For a "positive" or "descriptive" psychology, "will," as I take it, is simply a name for a peculiar form of "vital series," in which the individual terms are all complexes of pleasure-pain feeling and ideas with kinæsthetic sensations. Moreover, it is reasonable to argue that we only become

conscious of "conation" through the experience of thwarted "conation" ¹

It is specially important to keep these considerations in mind in reading popular expositions of psychology, which frequently speak as if the immediate object of "desire" and "will" were actually the execution of movement. We are said, in common parlance, to "will" the movements of our own limbs, and, in developed adult life, and in cases where a certain end can only be attained by a previous study of the processes required to bring it about, the statement is correct enough. In learning any new physical accomplishment, such as walking or piano-playing or cycling, we may, with sufficient accuracy, be said to will the requisite movements of leg or hand or arm, provided we take care to remember that, in strict parlance, it is not the physical combination of muscular contraction, but the kinæsthetic sensation, the peculiar "feel" of the movement, that we consciously anticipate and seek to bring about. But of the infant at the beginning of his career as an intelligent being even so much as this cannot be said. As Professor Baldwin has so unanswerably pointed out in his important work on *Mental Development in the Child and the Race*, it is primarily not a movement, but the sensation secured by the movement, that is desired. When the child who has once tasted sugar "grabs" at a lump of the delicious stuff, it is not the movement of "grabbing" but the taste of the sugar that he proposes to himself to enjoy. The grabbing movement, in its first ill-co-ordinated forms, follows upon the sight of the sugar and a desire for a renewal of the pleasant taste in consequence of inherited physiological adaptation, it is only at the later stage when the movement has been repeated sometimes successfully, sometimes without result, that attention, in consequence of this lack of uniform success, comes to be diverted to the kinæsthetic sensations themselves.

In fact, the direct willing of movements, more accurately, of sensations of movement, only appears in human life as a transitory and intermediate episode. Our first instinctive

¹ The well-known fact that the encountering and surmounting of difficulties is in itself a source of great pleasure to many men seems to afford grounds against our theory. On that theory, the experiences in which the charm in question lies are precisely those changes in emotional tension of which we have spoken above.

and rudimentary movements are not "willed," nor, in the final stage of development, where the co-ordination of movements has become a matter of habit, are they willed either. It is only in the transitional stage, during which we are learning to co-ordinate our movements, that kinæsthetic sensations are directly attended to, anticipated or willed. The trained musician or craftsman is as absorbed in the anticipation of the results of movement and as oblivious of the sensations of movement themselves as the infant. In this fact, more than in any other, lies the truth of the familiar proverb that "habit" is "second nature."

These remarks will indicate, with sufficient clearness, the way in which the phenomena of "volition" may be described in accordance with our general psychological scheme. For the elementary condition of which all "volition" is only a more complicated form is that of "craving," and "craving,"¹ as we have already explained it, is just that state of highly emotional anticipation in which we have found the simplest phenomenon which can be recognised by psychology of moral action. The determination of the exact point at which such a craving or desire passes into an act of "will" seems to be a matter of philological rather than psychological interest, and need therefore not detain us from our argument. Some would, perhaps, say that desire becomes "will" at the point where it becomes necessary to anticipate not merely the experiences in which the vital series terminate (the *end* of action), but also the series of kinæsthetic sensations which must intervene between the final and initial stages of the process (the *means*), others may prefer to call no desire "will" unless it has been preceded by a condition of mental debate between alternatives (*choice*). For us the question has no importance, when once we have seen that "will," defined in either way, and "desire" itself are not simple but complex states, and have by the analysis of them into their component elements made it clear that a theory of moral sentiments must also be a theory of moral action.

The questions commonly raised about the "freedom" and

¹ "Craving" in the psychological sense must, of course, be distinguished from mere organic cravings such as hunger. Hunger does not become a "craving" in the psychological sense, *i.e.* a craving for something, until the unpleasant sensation is accompanied by some reminiscence of the objects which have in the past afforded nourishment.

the "autonomy" of "will" have, from our point of view, no psychological significance. The consideration of them belongs partly to that part of ethics which deals with the final problems arising out of the discussion of the moral ideal and moral progress, partly to the general metaphysical theory of causation. In so far as these questions depend upon ethical considerations, we shall have something to say about them in a later chapter, where we hope to discuss certain perplexing dilemmas connected with the notion of moral progress. Into the wider problems raised by the concept of causality it would be improper to enter in any detail in an essay like the present, and we shall consequently reserve the full exposition of any conclusions to which we may have come on those subjects for a more suitable occasion.¹

¹ But see the supplementary note to chap. v.

CHAPTER IV

THE TYPE OF VIRTUE

IN our last chapter we attempted to construct, on a purely empirical basis, a psychological account of what may be called the formal characteristics of moral sentiment and action—approbation, obligation, responsibility, virtue, and merit. Our present chapter will be devoted rather to the consideration of some peculiarities in what we may call the material nature of morality. Now that we have seen what is meant in general by virtue and virtuous conduct, we propose to examine in outline some of the concrete types of behaviour which are recognised by the judgment of civilised men as praiseworthy, virtuous, and meritorious. The bearing of this examination upon the main topic of our essay is manifestly twofold. Indirectly, the discussion of types of virtue will help us to form an opinion of the claims of ethics to rank as a metaphysical science, by clearing the way for our coming account of the moral ideal. The examination will also be itself of direct service to us, inasmuch as it will of itself afford a preliminary answer to the question whether all moral action can be successfully referred to a common type. If ethics is rightly regarded as a body of inferences from finally true and valid metaphysical principles, we ought, according to the doctrine of our introductory chapter, to find in all the diversified forms of moral conduct the coherent and systematic development of a single type of behaviour, such inconsistencies and contra-

dictions as are to be found in the moral theory and conduct of mankind should be visibly of a merely incidental character, and should perceptibly tend to disappear as civilisation advances. If, on the other hand, our survey of the facts leads us to the conclusion that the forms of conduct recognised by civilised mankind as virtuous represent two or more radically divergent lines of development, and that there is no appearance of the elimination of this divergence by advance of civilisation, it will follow that ethics is a purely empirical and therefore essentially provisional and imperfect attempt to describe facts the ultimate relations of which to the whole scheme of existence cannot be apprehended by us.

Our discussion of egoism and altruism in connection with the primitive facts of the moral life has already prepared us to entertain as possible the notion that the latter of these alternatives may be the right one, and that there may be, in all our moral actions and judgments, radical and irreducible duality of development along diverging lines. The same conclusion will be still more forcibly pressed upon us in the course of the inquiry which awaits us. We shall find in the present chapter that this radical dualism affects all our ordinary ethical thought and action, and in subsequent chapters that it is no less present in the most philosophical theories we can construct of an ultimate moral ideal. If many modern moralists have failed to find this contradictoriness ingrained in the highest ideals of morality, the reason is probably that they have too much neglected such an inquiry as we now propose to undertake into the nature of those minor and subordinate ideals of conduct on which men have bestowed the specific names of individual virtues. In defiance of the salutary warnings of Bacon, too many of our moralists still hasten direct from their preliminary investigation of the formal characteristics of virtuous conduct to the establishment of the "highest generalisations" about the ultimate ideal, without bestowing more than a passing word of notice on the *axiomata media* of moral science. I mean the hypotheses involved in the current concepts of the typical virtues, justice, temperance, courage, and the rest. It is with these lesser ideals, these *axiomata media*, that we propose to deal in the course of the present chapter, with a view towards ascertaining

how far they may all be regarded as slightly varied types of one or two more general forms of conduct

This inquiry, neglected, as we have said, by the moderns, was familiar enough to the ancient moralists of Greece. With them the question as to the ultimate coherency and consistency of moral ideals appears in the form, "Is virtue one or many?" *i.e.* are those leading types of conduct which we know as the "cardinal" virtues capable of being reduced to one still more ultimate general and all-embracing type or not? Both Plato and Aristotle decide, as might be expected from philosophers whose speculation was dominated by an intense faith in the systematic rationality of the universe, for the unity of the virtues, and the method by which the former established this result in the dialogue *Protagoras* is for us extremely instructive. His method of procedure is to take several of the popularly recognised virtues, and to show by a consideration of concrete cases of their exercise that the same act which is commonly regarded as an instance of one may equally well be treated as an instance of another. An act of self-control is at the same time a wise act and a brave act, cowardice and license are manifestly unwise and unjust.

It is clear that an inquiry into the unity of virtue pursued by this method amounts practically to a discussion of the question, "Which is the chief commandment?" Plato's procedure at least suggests the possibility of arranging the recognised moral virtues in a serial order of ascending importance. There will probably be some among the recognised virtues of which the characteristic "formula" is so narrow as to apply only to the small class of acts popularly regarded as instances of the virtue in question, there will probably be others with "formulae" so comprehensive as to be applicable not merely to the special actions commonly recognised as exemplifying these virtues, but to the whole or nearly the whole of moral conduct. Chastity, for instance, is manifestly a virtue of the former kind, justice or truthfulness a virtue of the latter kind. There is nothing in the characteristic formula of chastity which applies to other acts than those which have to do with the gratification of the bodily appetites, nothing which would make it inconsistent for a person of perfect chastity to be avaricious, mean, untruthful, and unjust. The formulæ of justice and truthful-

ness, on the other hand, are of such universal sweep and comprehensiveness that you cannot be even moderately just or straightforward without at the same time possessing other virtues as well. For instance, though you may be at once chaste and unjust or deceitful, it is patent that the vast majority of acts of unchastity involve either injustice or untruthfulness towards some person or other. Adultery, for instance, is scarcely possible in a community ordered upon modern lines, apart from cruelty and deception, and even ordinary "looseness," such as is commonly regarded as compatible with a high standard of fair dealing and personal honour, seems in most cases to imply a degree of indifference as to the effects of your actions upon the ministers to your pleasures, such as would be regarded as gross cruelty or injustice if displayed towards any other class of persons. A man might make a resolution to live in chastity and adhere to his resolution through life without being in any other particular entitled to our respect, but a man who should resolve to be simply upright and just in his dealings would, it seems, in pursuance of his resolution, be compelled to earn considerable respect on the score of personal chastity also, or if this is not so, at least a man who had no other failing would exhibit the moral life in a less disorganised form than an "unjust" man. For this reason we should probably be justified in so far accepting the current code of conduct as to place chastity comparatively low and justice comparatively high in our ascending series of virtues.

By the application of the same method to the other generally recognised types of praiseworthy conduct, we shall in the end succeed in assigning to each its proper place in a scale in which those virtues which are most narrowly confined to one set of relations or one aspect of character occupy the lowest, and those which embrace most nearly the whole system of moral relations and most widely influence the moral character the highest place. If all the virtues can be satisfactorily arranged in a single serial order of this kind, we shall be warranted in drawing the inference that morality is really a single coherent systematic whole. It, on the other hand, we find that a single arrangement will not duly represent the facts, but that there are two or more highest types of virtue.

action, neither of which can be treated as a subordinate form of the other, we shall be driven to the conclusion that there is no single consistent moral ideal, and consequently that the science of morals must be of an empirical or provisional, not of a final or metaphysical kind.

We have thus before us in the present chapter two questions which, though closely related, are nevertheless distinct, and might conceivably be differently answered. The first question is, "Are the actions recognized as praiseworthy by civilised men capable of reduction to a single type?" The second, "If this is at present not the case, is there ground for holding that it will be so in an increasing degree as civilisation progresses?" The first question would be answered in the affirmative by all those moralists who find in any single concept, egoistic or altruistic—such, *e.g.*, as self-realisation or the service of others,—the key to ethics. The second might be answered affirmatively by thinkers who hold with Herbert Spencer that the egoistic and altruistic tendencies, though at present irreconcilable, will ultimately be adequately adjusted to one another by the natural working of the agencies which determine social evolution. From the standpoint of such thinkers it is clear that the expected adjustment could only be effected by the gradual elimination of those instincts which make for the preservation or gratification of the individual at the expense of future generations of the race. If all such tendencies are inconsistent with the permanence of the race, it is to be hoped, think these moralists, that, like other tendencies opposed to racial permanence, they will ultimately vanish in the progress of evolution. The ordinary conditions of survival, being unfavourable to a race of egoists, must make for the ultimate appearance of a type of beings whose highest satisfactions will be derived exclusively from such actions as conduce to racial permanence. Egoism would thus come in the end to be a mere disguise for altruism.

A similar result is arrived at, from very different premises, and by a different route, by egoistic moralists of the type of Nietzsche. According to these writers, true progress consists not in a growing adjustment of egoistic and altruistic tendencies, but in the final emancipation of the purely egoistic tendencies from the secular bonds of social and altruistic

feeling Altruism is a pestilent delusion which has from the first dawn of civilisation fettered individual development, though it has been always recognised for the imposture that it is by the few men of real worth and genius who have hitherto escaped the prevailing corruption. The "overman" whose advent is foretold by Nietzsche will only come into being when the exposure of the altruistic delusion has become general among all men of genuine ability. Then with the disappearance of the "popularised Platonism" and "slave-morality" of the reigning religion and civilisation of Christendom, the individual will recover his right to follow his own line of development and secure his own enjoyment, unfettered by the enervating sentiments of benevolence and compassion, which serve only to check the actions of the strong and capable and to keep in existence the incapable and weak.

Ideas of this kind, expounded in philosophical form in the brilliant ethical writings of Nietzsche, seem to make their appearance in literature whenever civilisation and social organisation have reached the point at which their pressure is really felt by persons of originality and capacity. Plato has shown how prevalent and attractive they were in the Athens of the fourth century by his pictures of Thrasymachus and Calicles, in our own day they have been widely popularised by the literary influence of Baudelaire and Ibsen, to say nothing of lesser names, and seem to bid fair to be accepted for a time as a sort of ethical gospel by our clever reviewers, dramatists, and magazine writers. Some of this popularity is undoubtedly to be ascribed to the charm which paradox has always possessed for the half-educated mind, but something is also due to the justifiable revolt of capacity and intelligence against the well-meaning inconsistencies of current altruistic theory and the good-natured half-heartedness of current benevolent practice.¹

The result of the discussions of this and the two following chapters will be to show that a negative answer must be given to both the questions which we have proposed at the beginning of the present section. Altruism and egoism, we shall contend, are divergent developments from the common psychological root of primitive ethical sentiment. Both developments are

¹ Compare the excellent description of the genesis of this train of thought in Plato, *Rep* vii. pp 538-39. R. L. Stevenson's "Fable of the Sick Man and the Fireman" wittily illustrates the inconsistency of our average "altruistic" theory and practice.

alike unavoidable, and each is ultimately irreconcilable with the other. Neither egoism nor altruism can be made the sole basis of moral theory without mutilation of the facts, nor can any higher category be discovered by the aid of which their rival claims may be finally adjusted. Such adjustment as is indispensable for moral practice will prove to be as indefensible in theory as it is necessary and convenient in action. Neither in theory nor in practice can we get on without both, yet no theory will enable us to say why or where the one is to be subordinated to the other, and in practice we only succeed in subordinating either on occasion because we do not wait for a consistent theory before we act.

These positions, if established, certainly amount to a confession that moral theory is hopelessly bankrupt when confronted with the demand of the philosophical intellect for ultimate consistency and system, but the bankruptcy is not peculiar to ethics. The current concepts of physical science, *e.g.* the atomistic theory of matter, the kinetic theory of gases, the undulatory theory of light, seem to involve assumptions no less inconsistent than those made by the moralist. It is apparently just as hard to reconcile, for instance, the inertness ascribed by physicists to matter with the phenomena of gravitation as to adjust the respective claims of self-realisation and self-sacrifice upon our moral allegiance¹. The empirical sciences are, in fact, in the same position as many a commercial house of uncertain credit: so long as they are only called upon to meet current obligations as they arise they are solvent, but a sudden demand for immediate liquidation in full of all outstanding claims spells irremediable ruin.

I go on to illustrate these points in some detail from the character of the various special virtues commonly held in esteem among civilised men. As we have seen, the way is prepared for the future growth of egoism and altruism by the existence even in the infra-ethical world of a double set of instincts, those connected with self-preservation and those connected with reproduction. As even the rudiments of social as distinct from family organisation appear to be wanting

¹ Compare Stallo, *Concepts and Theories of Modern Physics*, chap. 11. ("on the inertia of elements of mass")

among most of those higher animals of whose inner life we are able to form some conjectural notions, we may say that the analogue among them of the conflict between self-regarding and self-sacrificing ideals is a similar conflict between instincts which secure the preservation of the adult individual and instincts which secure the production and protection of the coming generation¹ We do not, of course, forget that there is no necessary opposition in principle between the preservation of the individual and the perpetuation of the species The same qualities which make for the protection of the individuals of one generation against competitors in the struggle for existence or against an unfavourable combination of physical conditions make also, in the majority of cases, for the success of the species in perpetuating itself throughout a series of generations It is to the interest of the species as a whole, as well as to the interest of existing members of it, that the individuals should possess the instincts which lead to the securing of nourishment and the evasion or successful resistance of the attacks of enemies. And, of course, also on the whole the exercise of the reproductive functions is not only pleasant to the individual, but necessary for its health

Yet, as has been already urged in the last chapter, there are numerous conjunctions in which the two sets of instincts come into collision, and on such occasions either the existing adult individual or the immature future generation has to be sacrificed.² As nature can dispense neither with the instinct of self-protection nor with those of sex and of parental affection, sometimes the one and sometimes the other must for the time be paramount While it is clear that a species would soon cease to exist if its mature members were never to face pain, privation, and death in the interests of their young, it is equally clear that it would also cease to exist if the adults invariably put parental affection before self-preservation A

¹ For some acute remarks on the absence from animal life of a true analogue of human society see L F Ward, *Outlines of Sociology*, p 89, ff Mr Ward seems to me, however, to exaggerate the artificiality of human society Still it is true that civilised society is a *machine*, a system of consciously devised arrangements for securing certain objects, as well as an organism, though the current reaction against the old "social contract" theories has blinded many modern philosophers to the fact I should have owed something at this point to Mr H R Marshall had his *Reason and Instinct* appeared when the above was written

² Compare the risks run by the male spider in the act of generation, the dangers to which birds expose themselves at breeding time, the effect of brilliant colouring in making animals more visible to their enemies, etc

certain amount of what in a human being would be selfishness is requisite among the higher species if the existing generation is not to perish before the next is capable of drifting for itself. Complete 'altruism' would be as fatal to animal as we shall by and by see that it would be to human life. Hence it is necessary in the animal world that individuals should, on the one hand, be generally ready to expose themselves to pain and danger in defence of their offspring, but should, on the other, not expose themselves in this way beyond certain limit, which it is, of course, impossible to ascertain.

Now consider the way in which this same relation between two instinctive tendencies which may at any moment become antagonistic manifests itself first in the impulsive and afterwards in the deliberately purposive actions of human beings. It is not until action has passed into the stage of deliberate action from choice that it can properly be called either selfish or unselfish. So long as we are concerned only with the behaviour of the young and uncivilised, who are still in the main prone, without reflection on consequences or deliberation between alternatives, to follow the promptings of any and every pleasant or painful anticipation as soon as it arises we can describe the phenomena before us in almost the same terms as are applicable to the case of animal instinct. The only difference seems to be that in the case of animal instinct as in the case of the very earliest human actions, it is rather present sensation and perception than ideal anticipation which is endowed with the emotional colouring requisite to set the physiological machinery at work. The bird building its nest, the insect selecting the leaf upon which to deposit its eggs, are presumably not under the influence of *ideas* at all. Certain immediately present sensations or perceptions of sight or smell, seem to be attended by powerful emotional accompaniments, and to set the bodily machinery working in a way predetermined by the inherited connections in the nervous system, without the excitation of anything that can properly be called expectation.¹

It would, however, I suppose, be impossible to deny

¹ Some recent students, e.g. Bethge, in Pflüger's *Archiv*, vol. lxx, seem to call even this in doubt for insects, but on somewhat arbitrary grounds. The suggestion of Mr Thorndike (*Animal Intelligence*, p. 73), that even the dog has 'no ideas' appears less probable to me than it does even to its author.

that among the higher animals at any rate the workings of original instinct may be reinforced in consequence of past pleasant or painful experiences. With the cat, the horse, the dog, the lessons learned from experience seem to supplement or to counteract the effects of mere instinct. So far as this is so, we can hardly deny that we have in the higher animals at least the beginnings of the ideal form of experience, memory and expectation. It has sometimes been denied that a dog's signs of delight at seeing his master take down his hat and gloves are due to the expectation of a walk, but the denial has every appearance of being dictated by a preconceived theory of the nature of animal consciousness which has little to recommend it. To be consistent, those who deny expectation to the dog ought also to deny him memory. They ought, *e.g.*, to hold that the dog never really recognises his friends, and that all apparent tokens of pleasure in their society are the products of a physiological mechanism which has no counterpart in the animal's consciousness. If you go so far as to reduce an animal's life—with Professor Green—to a mere succession of disconnected sensations, there seems no reason why you should not go one step further and revive the Cartesian doctrine of animal automatism. We have, I think, no right to deny positively the existence of rudimentary ideal experiences even among the lower types of animal life.¹

In the psychology of human beings it is clear that we have from a very early stage to deal with the existence of true "free" ideas, and consequently with more or less definite memories and anticipations of particular sequences of experiences in the way of sense-perception. Merely instinctive or impulsive action very early in the child's life begins to be overlaid by what we may call true "ideo-motor" action—action, that is, which is regularly preceded by the pleasant or painful anticipation of certain consequences. For anything we know to the contrary, the behaviour of the burnt child that dreads the fire may already be a case of such genuine ideo-motor activity,² following on a recollection of the previous experience

¹ Cf. Stout, *Analytic Psychology*, i. 51, though he draws the line between "noetic" and "anoetic" consciousness at a slightly different level.

² May I say here once for all, that when I use the word "activity" I imply no philosophical theory of "will," but understand simply any sequence of movement on the part of an animal of which the initial stage is a sensation or percept?

of hunning. We have already said that all properly *ethical* action is primarily of this *ideo-motor* type. If in developed life we often attach epithets expressive of moral approbation and disapprobation to actions which seem to follow automatically upon certain conditional experiences without the intervention of the ideal process of anticipation, this is because all these actions are of the habitual, *i.e.* of the secondarily automatic type, and are conceived of as depending upon the series of past *ideo-motor* actions by which the habit has been contracted.

To put the same thought in slightly different language we may say that all truly ethical conduct is, in the phraseology of Mr Lester Ward, "teleic,"—is determined by the more or less definite anticipation of an end or result. It is merely in the complexity and scope of this end and the definiteness with which it is envisaged, that the systematic pursuit of a central purpose which characterises the moral life of the most intelligent members of civilised society, differs from the sporadic and unregulated behaviour of a child or a savage. The great function discharged by moral codes and social institutions in the practical, like that discharged by scientific hypotheses in the theoretical sphere, is that of acting as a vast labour-saving apparatus. What is, in both savage and civilised life, desirable from the individual point of view, is the continuous satisfaction, if not of all his anticipations, at least of the most permanent and persistent of them, what is desirable for the species, if we may so express ourselves, from Nature's point of view, is permanent self-maintenance, at the smallest cost of physical expenditure, against the unfavourable influences of a constantly changing environment, and it is just in the certainty and organic economy with which these results are obtained, that civilised life has the advantage over savage or semi-civilised life. Our inheritance of a vast system of scientific hypotheses and moral institutions makes it possible for us to obtain, with ease and without waste of energy, what can only be obtained by the savage by the essentially wasteful method of haphazard trial of various alternatives, which is also Nature's method in the infra-human world.¹ In particular,

¹ We must not, however, forget that in all but the lowest of human races, it is not merely self-maintenance against external influences, but an increased sense of power over the material and social environment, which the individual desires. Merely to "go on and not to die" is the ideal of the savage, and of the hacks and incompetents.

our social and moral institutions, like our scientific hypotheses, enable us to modify our environment to suit our own wants, instead of waiting for the environment gradually to modify ourselves, as the animal and, in a lesser degree, the savage have to wait. This is a difference which, as Mr Ward well remarks, completely revolutionises the whole conditions of the evolutionary process, and makes it practically impossible for us to treat human development, and the growth of morality, which is a part of human development, as a mere subsection of the general history of biological evolution. In our penultimate chapter we shall see the enormous importance of this revolution in its bearing upon the theory of the ultimate moral ideal.

As we have already said, ideo-motor or "telic" action, at its first entrance upon the scene, is neither exclusively self-regarding nor exclusively altruistic. What actions we should approve, or anticipate with pleasure, must have depended originally upon the peculiar instincts which the human species possessed, and these in turn are determined by the general conditions of a successful struggle for existence in the period before the dawn of purposive intelligence. Like any other species which has to maintain itself at once against competitors in the struggle for existence and against unfavourable variations of the physical environment, the human species has naturally need both of the instincts which make for self-preservation, and those which make for the successful reproduction of the race. Thus, in the human species, from the very beginning of its career, there must have been present those possibilities of conflict between mutually exclusive courses of instinctive action which we have discovered in animal life as a whole. And, consequently, we should naturally expect to find, as is actually the case, that there are among the forms of behaviour approved of by even the most primitive of mankind some which secure, or are supposed to secure, advantages to the species or to the community at the expense of suffering and loss to the individual exhibiting them. Room is thus

potents of civilised society, what the man of genuine and conscious capacity seeks for himself is extended and amplified, not merely continued, existence. We might fairly ask whether the "will to might" of Nietzsche is not the one fundamentally human impulse, and the secret origin of the one fundamentally human institution, property.

made for the growth of deliberately self-regarding and consciously self-sacrificing types of conduct, as soon as the conceptions of myself and other selves are formed by the ordinary workings of the psychical mechanism. Both originate in a form of approbation which we have already called "impersonal," in consequence of the previous existence of a double set of instincts and impulses.

It must not, of course, be supposed that a hard and fast line can be drawn between one set of moral qualities which are purely "self-regarding," and another set which are exclusively "altruistic." As a matter of fact, the relations which we discovered in the infra-human hold good also in the human world. Just as the self-preserved instincts are no less valuable to the species than the reproductive and parental instincts, so, as a general rule, the same qualities and the same line of action which are productive of permanent satisfaction to the individual human being are also favourable to the permanence of the human species. There is scarcely a "self-regarding" quality which is not, in the great majority of circumstances, as beneficial to the community of which the individual is a member as it is to the individual himself. And the very existence of the sexual and parental—to say nothing of the weaker gregarious—instincts and feelings involves the consequence that habitual suppression of all lines of conduct by which the community benefits to the immediate loss of the individual would ultimately make against the individual's chances of securing permanent satisfaction for the most persistent and unconquerable of his own cravings.

Courage, for instance, was looked upon by Aristotle as a typical form of self-renunciation in the interests of the "city" yet it is manifest that courage is, on the whole, as necessary for the continued enjoyment of the individual as it is for the protection of the community or the species against its rivals. From the very fact that the existence of the species or community has to be secured by the action of individuals of whose actions one main spring lies in the pleasurable and painfulness of their own anticipations, it necessarily follows that there must, on the whole, be a harmony between the "egoistic" and the "altruistic" tendencies. A species of beings who did not in the main find their individual pleasures

in the performance of the same acts which make for the continued existence of their kind, would speedily fall a prey to their numerous rivals, and the same is, of course, true of the artificial communities of human society.

But we must not allow ourselves to be led into optimistic exaggerations about the degree of this "pre-established" harmony. The actual human world cannot be shown to be a true counterpart of the Leibnitzian system of monads, in which each member by fulfilling the law of its own development necessarily discharges the highest service to the development of all the rest. In the human as in the animal world there are constantly arising conjunctions of circumstances in which the attainment of permanent individual satisfaction is incompatible with the complete discharge of the actions required by the needs of the community or the species. The most striking example of this conflict is that which so powerfully impressed the imagination of Aristotle, the voluntary surrender of life on the field of battle from a sense of the obligation of sacrificing one's self for the good of the community. We have in this supreme self-surrender a phenomenon which must, in the present writer's judgment at least, present insuperable difficulties to the school of moralists who insist on regarding self-satisfaction in some form or other as the universal end of all moral action. There is no real parallel between the self-devotion of the citizen-soldier and the self-restraint of the enlightened egoist who chooses to forego a present satisfaction in order to obtain later on "higher" satisfactions—that is, satisfaction for more constantly recurring and unconditional cravings. The peculiarity of the case lies precisely in the fact that the self-devoted victim is, by his own deliberate act, cutting himself off from all possibility of future satisfactions of any kind. As Aristotle tells us, it is precisely the man of highest character and greatest public spirit to whom we should expect the sacrifice to be the most painful, just because his life is the richest and fullest in enjoyment. Just in proportion to the intellectual and artistic endowments of the patriotic citizen, what he gives up on the field of battle is a real "self."

And there can be for him, let us observe, no question of a compensation for what he loses. You may, of course if you like, assert that the sacrifice will be compensated in another

life, but the assertion is incapable of proof. If it is permissible to argue from present conditions of existence, it would be more reasonable to suppose that self-surrender may be as much a feature of the "future life" as of the present. And if the argument from now to then be ruled out of court, your assertions about the future are a mere appeal to the unknown. In any case men have sacrificed and do sacrifice themselves who positively disbelieve in the future life, and have therefore no expectations whatever of compensation. It would be in vain, for instance, to argue that the brief satisfaction of dying with the assurance of victory is so intense as to outweigh the more numerous and permanent, though less intense satisfactions which are given up. For the dying soldier, if conscious at all, is, as a rule, too keenly conscious of his own physical sufferings to be able to enjoy the satisfaction of a sense of triumph. It is the favoured few only who are able in the death-agony to receive the intelligence of their country's success, and to die happy in the news. For the great majority of the slain, death in battle perhaps means a death of unrelieved pain. Might it be said, one shares by anticipation in the victory? But some would sacrifice themselves even if defeat were certain. And, in the citizen-soldier at least, we must not assume more than a spice of the mere lust of fighting "for the fun of the thing." Here, then, if anywhere, we have a genuine deliberate sacrifice of self with all its satisfactions, to a good in which the person making the sacrifice cannot expect to have any share.

Something of the same kind meets us in more than one form of devotion to the service of society or humanity. In the case of all those not uncommon persons who voluntarily abandon a life of intellectual and artistic self-culture in order to labour as missionaries, doctors, or hospital nurses among degraded and hostile populations, or to take up the thankless and onerous burdens of the public service, an unbiassed student cannot fail to perceive the existence of a self-sacrifice for which life affords no adequate personal compensation. It is, of course, easy to appeal, in the fashion of popular moralists, to the approbation of conscience as affording an ample reward for all that the self-denying servant of the public has given up, but the appeal betokens an ample lack of psychological

insight It is only in edifying literature of a certain class that the man who has given up all to work for the benefit of his fellows is constantly being rewarded by the intense satisfaction with which he contemplates the success of his own virtuous exertions In real life his "reward" is more often a burden of care and fatigue culminating in failure and enhanced by ingratitude Even the successes over which outsiders go into raptures are apt to strike cold to the heart of their author who knows, as the outside world does not, how mean a proportion they bear to what he has projected

Nor are matters much mended if you prefer to appeal to the pains of self-censure which the self-sacrificing labourer would have experienced if he had preferred ease and self-culture to public duty Which of us has not learned by humiliating experiences how readily the shame and pain of knowingly shirking a duty can be merged in the enjoyment of the cultured ease which our neglect of our obligations has purchased? If personal self-satisfaction were indeed the sole end of our actions and the sole result anticipated by us from them with pleasure, it would be impossible to defend those acts of self-sacrifice which all the world agrees to regard as deserving of the highest degree of approbation From "self-seeking" to disinterested benevolence there is no road, and the apparent subsumption of both under a common name by the theory of self-realisation, turns out on closer inspection to be little more than a piece of verbal legerdemain In every life that is anywhere touched with ethical nobility there are sacrifices of self not a few for which no future personal compensation is expected or desired, and these sacrifices gain all their dignity and sacredness from our conviction that the causes and persons for whom they are made are not convenient or romantic *aliases* for ourselves

On the other hand, you have to mutilate the facts of the moral life even more, in order to make them all appear as instances of altruistic devotion to others or to society, than is done by the self-realisers "Self-love" as Shakespeare reminds us, is after all "not so vile a sin as self-neglecting" By agreeing to call anything in which I am interested myself you can, with some violence to language and some confusion of thought, continue to make all morality wear the shape of

self-satisfaction, but there is no conceivable device, short of boldly denying the facts, by which you can make it all look like self-surrender or self-forgiveness. For we all notoriously approve, not only devotion to the interests of the community, but also determination to make the most of one's self, we censure as morally wrong not only neglect of public duty, but also neglect of mental and æsthetic self-culture. It is no doubt true that honest self-culture commonly ends by proving beneficial to a wider public. The artist who steadily keeps true to his own highest ideals of self-respecting work and steadily refuses to win popularity and bestow pleasure by complying with what he feels to be unworthy standards of taste, often succeeds ultimately in educating the tastes of the public, the labours of the scholar or man of science are commonly in various ways of direct or indirect benefit to the community of which he is a member. Yet who would be prepared to say that the only moral justification of the patient labour of artist or scholar is to be found in the remote influence he may possibly exercise upon the tastes and habits of other men? What excuse can be pleaded from the extreme altruistic point of view for the poet who chooses to give to the world "what the few must rather than what the many may like," or for the mathematician who devotes all the energies of a richly endowed nature to the production of a few score pages of obscure speculations which are very likely devoid of all practical significance, and will probably never be intelligible to more than three or four persons at once? Would our moral judgment of the worth of such a life of stubborn devotion to an artistic ideal as those of Beethoven and Wagner be other than it is, if those great men had not happened in the end to succeed in enlisting a considerable measure of popular admiration?

These may be said to be mere appeals *ad vulgus*, but the principle involved in them is an important one, and, once seriously apprehended, is fatal to our common unthinking altruism. It is this. If it is our duty to labour for the realisation of a certain type of mental life among our fellow-men, that life must be conceded to be in itself worthy, and if worthy, then deserving of attainment by ourselves. If certain states of thought and feeling are morally so valuable

as to be worth promoting at any cost among those around me, they are also worth promoting in myself, and it is my reasonable service to realise them for myself as well as for my neighbours. It is absurd to maintain that culture or knowledge or happiness is of such worth that it is a moral duty to promote it, and then to deny that it is a moral duty to seek it for myself. If altruism as a theory of morals were the whole truth, the only thing worth promoting in myself, or in any one else, ought to be the altruistic spirit, the logical consequence of accepting altruistic premises would be the inference that my one and only duty is to promote in my neighbour an unselfish determination to promote in his neighbour the determination to promote the same sentiments in some one else. Universal altruism would thus end in universal aimless absorption in the affairs of our neighbour's soul.

But if this absurd consequence is to be avoided, it must at least be recognised that certain mental states, other than a general benevolence towards one's neighbours, are in themselves of worth. In order to give benevolence itself a definite channel in which to work, it must at least be recognised that health is better than disease, fulness than hunger, knowledge than ignorance, and cultivated taste than vulgarity. And if any self is made richer in lasting satisfactions, and therefore morally worthier by the possession of these qualities, my own self must also be the richer and the better for their attainment. To put the whole case against "altruism" in the form of a dilemma, we may fairly ask: If nothing but unselfishness is morally valuable, why should I trouble about securing any other blessing than the spirit of unselfishness for my neighbours? If anything else is morally valuable, how shall I answer to my own conscience and to my God for neglecting its attainment in myself? It is not given to every one to acquiesce, after the manner of Kant, in a doctrine which asserts that it is a moral duty to promote in other men what it would be morally wrong to promote in yourself, nor, like him, to trust to the arrangements of a future life to abolish this standing contradiction.¹

¹ One might precisely invert Kant's dictum with equal plausibility. For it may be said, I can more or less accurately tell what will make me happy: I can then not blunder in deciding what will make my neighbour happy. Since then to the ~~neighbour~~

Thus a brief consideration of the logical alternatives of egoism and altruism brings us to the same conclusion to which we were led by our previous examination of the psychology of approbation. We found then that while the very existence of the instincts subservient to the propagation and protection of a future generation makes it possible for an individual to approve of actions by which the species or community benefits at the cost of pain and loss to himself, it is also possible for the tribe or society as a whole to approve of qualities such as physical beauty, poetical gifts, etc., which are of no visible public service, or are only of public service *because* they are already approved of. We are thus prepared to find that there is a double line of moral development. On the one hand, whatever makes the individual's life richer in the enjoyment of those qualities which are the objects of approbation must be admitted to have direct moral worth, on the other hand, approbation and moral worth attach equally to qualities of character and lines of conduct, by which the wellbeing of the community gains at the expense of the individual.

You thus get two more or less diverging and incompatible ethical ideals. On the one hand a man may set himself, as we say, to make the most of himself. That is, he may, as far as possible, seek to bring order into his own moral life by aiming systematically at the fullest possible qualification of those cravings which he finds to yield permanent and unconditional satisfaction, to the exclusion or repression of all indulgences which are incompatible with this ideal. The first great principle of a life lived on this plan might be formulated in familiar language thus, "Know what you really want, and see that you get it, without being deluded by spurious substitutes." The ultimate aim of a life of conformity to this precept would be the enjoyment of an experience as rich as possible in satisfactions of every kind, and free from the discontent and mental anarchy which result from the undue preference of those satisfactions which are neither

assumption, every one knows at once where the path of duty lies, it is surely wiser to aim at making my neighbour virtuous than to play Providence for his benefit. And if it be urged that you cannot tell when another man's virtue is real, I reply, that it is about as difficult to say when another man's happiness is real. If it is true that we may make a hypocritical pretence to virtue, it is equally true that we may and often do counterfeit happiness.

lasting nor unconditional. Such a life would manifestly be self-centred, but at the same time would be very far from being one of luxury or self-indulgence in the ordinary sense of those words. The very postulate that the most lasting and unconditional satisfactions are to be preferred would, as Plato has irrefutably shown in the ninth book of the *Republic* and elsewhere, mean that the pleasures of intellectual activity and æsthetic culture should take precedence over those of ordinary sensual appetite¹. Nay it would be perfectly logical for one who accepted the principle of self-culture without reservation to lead by preference a life of rigid stoic asceticism. For it is only by a process of rigid self-discipline and careful subordination of passing cravings to permanent needs that a man can ever succeed in getting what on the whole he really wants out of life. Self-culture is only to be attained by the deliberate and unhesitating surrender of some at least of the discordant elements which constituted the untamed and disorderly self with which the process of cultivation began.

Against this ideal of self-culture we may, however, with equal right set the ideal of social service. For some of the things for which we care and which we approve are other than personal states of satisfaction. We desire not only a certain type of enjoyment² for ourselves, but also a similar type of enjoyable existence for other members of the community or the race. And this social ideal is often not to be realised except by the surrender of what we most desire for ourselves. We may thus, every one of us, be called upon in the course of our life for acts of self-sacrifice which go much deeper than the self-discipline of the cultivated egoist, who only gives up what he cares about for the moment in order to get what will afford him lasting contentment³. In true self-sacrifice, as distinguished from mere self-discipline, we

¹ Or at least *such* "sensual appetite" as could stand this test would be more than mere appetite.

² I use the word, of course, in its widest possible sense to include the pleasures of action as well as those of repose. The results of our third chapter would justify the Socratic preference for the former class of pleasures as against the latter, independently of any question of "quantity." For it is in the pleasure of action *par excellence* that we obtain *satisfaction* for previously felt wants.

³ I do not of course mean by the phrase "lasting contentment" to countenance the mistake of placing true happiness in any permanent or unchanging state of consciousness. "Lasting contentment" is merely a convenient abbreviation for "the steady progressive satisfaction of an organised system of persistent wants."

give up, without hope of compensation, what would yield us lasting enjoyment, in order that some other person may enjoy

Now the point upon which I wish here to lay special stress is that, as I have already said, these two ideas are manifestly not entirely compatible with each other, and at the same time that there is no more ultimate principle by the light of which their rival claims on our allegiance can be adjusted. For the most part, no doubt, in a well-organised society, the same line of conduct serves to promote the realisation of the individualistic and of the social ideals. On the whole, in making the best of ourselves, we are also to the best of our power contributing to the happiness of society. But the agreement is after all far from absolute, and may, at any moment, be disturbed by an unusually stringent demand of obedience from either side. In a time of social disorder, for instance, any man may have to choose once and for all between abandoning the task of self-culture or impersonal scientific research and neglecting the duty of assisting to maintain social order or national existence. And in such a case, it seems impossible to decide universally that the claim of either ideal should be paramount. Is Hegel, for instance, to go on with the *Phænomenologie* while German national life is being extinguished by the cannon at Jena, or to shoulder his musket and do what he can to repel the invader?

To questions of this kind it seems impossible to give a single satisfactory answer. Most men would be agreed that these are occasions when the duty of protecting society becomes so imperative that all considerations of self-culture must be set aside, most men again would admit that there are limits to the claims of society, but who can say what these limits are? In practice we seem to effect a more or less satisfactory compromise between the competing ideals only because we do not stop to reason out their respective claims upon us. As soon as you come to state reasons for espousing one side or the other of the alternatives, there seems to be considerations of equal cogency to be adduced on both sides. Your country's national existence will be imperilled, says one, unless you and other citizens sacrifice everything else to the duty of defending her. Yes, the retort

might be, And if I fall in the task, who will complete my philosophy? But surely, urges the first speaker, a philosophy which will at best afford intellectual satisfaction to a few score persons, ought not to be preferred before institutions which secure the comfort and happiness of millions. Why not, says the other, when one comes to consider quality as well as quantity of existence? it is good that knowledge should be in the world, even though the number of persons capable of possessing it be insignificant. And thus the dispute might continue interminably, were it not that the necessities of our situation as a rule compel us to decide on our line of action without a complete investigation of the arguments which can be alleged for or against it.

Hegel's remark that there is something sophistical in the interminable search for "grounds" or "reasons" is certainly applicable to all cases of appeal for guidance in determining the limits of self-sacrifice to ethical first principles¹. Even if we imagine the case of a man who should deliberately preserve his own life by neglect of what would generally be regarded by others as obvious public duty, it would be difficult to find valid theoretical arguments against such conduct which could not be met by equally valid ones on the part of a consistent and conscientious egoist. One can imagine the unending wordy strife. You ought not to have run away from the battle, or ought not to have declined to stand for Parliament. But I think my life of self-culture or of research too valuable to be thrown away upon the pursuit of party ends which will give no satisfaction to me, and are of doubtful value to any one. But the public generally regard your conduct as cowardly and self-indulgent, and will not fail upon opportunity to make you sensible of their opinion. What then? *populus me sibilat at mihi plaudo*. Am I to dread the censure of an ignorant and unthinking public more than the condemnation I shall incur from my own conscience by proving false to my

¹ Hegel, *Logik*, II 1 III. B b, Anmerkung (*Works*, IV p 103). I transcribe the main part of the passage on account of its intrinsic interest.

"That search after grounds which constitutes the special characteristic of discursive reasoning (*raisonnement*) is thus an unending backward and forward process (*Herum treiben*) which comes to no final determination. Several excellent grounds can be found for anything, or for its opposite, and a multitude of grounds may exist without any result. What Socrates and Plato call sophistry is nothing other than this reasoning from grounds, Plato contrasts with it the contemplation of the Idea, *i.e.* of the thing in and for itself, or in its Notion."

own highest ideals of a life in which every talent and faculty I possess finds adequate employment? And to the dispute might go on without possibility of being ended except by the voluntary withdrawal of the more impatient of the parties from so unedifying a discussion.

In practice we do not of course attempt to think these things out, but take now the egoistic now the altruistic line, as our personal disposition or the circumstances of the particular case incline us. In such rule cases we find it convenient to make for our own practical guidance, the intellect desirous of strict logic will find nothing but utter confusion and unprincipled compromise. For instance, I ought to devote part of my income to purposes of benevolence, and again ought not, by unrestricted munificence, to leave my self without the means of acquiring adequate personal self-culture. But what degree of personal self-culture is adequate? Or again I ought to devote some part of my energies to the voluntary discharge of municipal duties, but not so much as to interfere with the prosecution of philosophical studies to which I have given myself, rather because I look to them for satisfaction of my personal craving for intellectual certainty than because of any benefit which I expect them to confer on other people who, after all, must answer their own questions in their own way. But *how much* of my time and energies may I devote to the solution of my intellectual difficulties without incurring the reproach of selfish indifference to my social responsibilities?

These are questions which we should find it practically impossible to answer, were it not that they are in the main answered for us in a convenient way, though on no perceptible principle, by the social customs of our day and class. In the main I take so much time, and no more nor less, from my philosophic studies for purposes of civic duty because it is what is expected of me by my social circle. I restrict my philanthropic expenditure within certain limits because my society expects me to come up to a certain standard of physical, intellectual, or æsthetic self-culture. If I am a man of sufficient originality of mind and strength of character to be discontented with the traditional compromise, it is pretty certain that my notion of the relative importance of self-culture and social benevolence will lay me open to the censure

of society either for undue self-absorption or for undue self-neglect, or not impossibly for both at once

As a matter of general ethical theory it seems impossible to say anything more definite than this. No normal human being is likely ever to find satisfaction either in mere self-culture or in pure self-sacrifice. Any ethical theory which means to take serious account of the whole body of the phenomena of the moral life must therefore recognise "egoistic" duties and virtues by the side of "altruistic" duties and virtues, but no theory can satisfactorily adjust the claims of the two¹. Such further consideration as it may be necessary to give to problems connected with the conflict between the claims of self and society will now be deferred to a subsequent chapter. We proceed to illustrate the influence of the moral dualism just described upon the formation of the concepts of the particular virtues commonly recognised in civilised society.

After what has just been urged we shall be prepared to find that it is impossible to give a single answer to the question, What is the highest type of virtue? This question has often been asked, and has received very various answers in different moral and religious systems. In ancient times Plato, and less positively Aristotle,² and in modern times Hoffding, have asserted that it is in *justice* that we find the fullest and most satisfactory realisation of the common principle of all moral action. Geulincx or Kant, if pressed for an answer, would probably have decided for obedience to law. The influence of the Christian religion has induced man to treat at one time personal chastity, at another universal benevolence, as the all-including virtue. While yet again there have been minds to which all virtue has appeared as some form or other of courage. It will be abundantly plain that we cannot, upon our premisses, agree entirely with any one of these attempts to bring all moral action under a single type. We shall expect to find, corresponding to the egoistic and the altruistic ideals, two most general or highest categories by the aid of which all moral conduct can be satisfactorily described. There will be some highest and most ultimate formula describing the

¹ Ethics, to parody Mr Bradley, consists mostly in finding bad reasons for being what you cannot help being.

² *ἐν δὲ δίκαιοσύνῃ συλληβδὴν πᾶσ' ἀρετῇ ἐνι* Arist. *Ethics*, 1129 b 29, Hoffding, *Ethik*, p. 124.

class of virtuous actions in which the end proposed is the benefit of society at large, or certain members of it other than ourselves, and another formula describing the moral actions which have direct relation to the enrichment of our own personal experience with sources of permanent and lasting satisfaction.

The highest and most perfect expression of the principles of moral altruism seems to be found in that law of *justice* which bids us treat every member of the whole community with just so much consideration and perform for him just such services as are most desirable in view of the good of the community as a whole¹. Justice is often opposed, as the minimum of unselfishness compatible with good moral character, to the higher virtues of benevolence, generosity, charity, but when it is remembered that the true ethical measure of the consideration due to any particular person is nothing other than the good of the whole society as it may be affected both in his person and in those of others who may be incidentally affected by our treatment of him, and further that, from the standpoint of rigid ethical justice, our own personal claims to consideration must be determined by the same impartial standards as those of any third person, it will become clear that true justice includes in itself all self-sacrifice except what is manifestly on any theory to be condemned, the futile flinging away of ourselves in gratifying the unreasonable desires of the worthless.² The formula of this ideal justice in apportioning enjoyments would be, "Every one to count for as

¹ By the *good* of the community, as of the individual, I mean lasting and unconditional satisfaction. My standard is thus the psychological one of *feeling*, not the biological one of *function*. I reserve discussions on this subject for a later chapter.

² It would perhaps not be unjust to christen the morality here repudiated "Tolstoyism."

Justice may be defined formally (as Mr Bradley defined it in *Ethical Studies*, p. 191, footnote) as adhering in your treatment of people to the rule you profess to go by. True or "ideal" justice, however, as he there admits, implies that you go by the rule of the morally *right*. What that rule is I have tried to indicate in the text. Ideal justice in this highest sense takes neither a man's *deserts*, as they are popularly called, nor his *needs*, as popularly estimated, as the exclusive standard by which his treatment is to be decided. Considerations of social good may demand that I should exert myself to perform good offices for a man who has not, as we phrase it, *deserved* any special regard from me by past services to me. So again, when the good of the community as a whole is made the standard, mercy may be the highest justice. On the other hand, it may be bad for the community as a whole that distress should be relieved in certain cases. *Eg* if charity to the idle acts as an inducement to idleness, it is not in the highest sense of the word just to bestow it. It is clear from what is said in the text that even the sacrifice of my life may be demanded from me by justice when it is a necessary step towards securing the permanent peace and content of the community.

much as and for no more than that to which his place in the general scheme of the community entitles him"

The familiar political and judicial maxim that "every one should count for one and nobody for more than one" is manifestly only a special case of this more general ethical principle. In matters in which every one is of equal importance to the community, every one *will* count as one and as no more, in cases where the fate of a single person may outweigh in its influence upon the good of the community that of thousands of others, every one does *not* and ought not to count as one. It is only just that the murderer of a poor and insignificant person should be punished equally with the murderer of a person of rank and wealth, because it is on the whole equally detrimental to the interests of society that murder should be rife in one class as in another, it is no less just that there should be exceptionally severe penalties attached to offences against the person of the supreme magistrate or the heir to the throne, because the harm done to the fabric of society by the commission of these offences would be immeasurably greater than if they had been perpetrated upon some private sufferer¹. It is thus the general needs of society, not the particular needs nor ever the particular deserts of the individual, which determine what is, in his case, the measure of true justice. It is only by gross misapprehension as to what really is the good of the whole community that the maxim *Salus imperii summa lex* can be perverted into a justification of tyranny and crime².

So much for the supreme principle of that type of moral action in which the satisfaction of a whole community is the object actually contemplated by the agent. If we turn to the other side of the question and ask what is the fullest and

¹ It will be remembered that even conduct which is in ordinary cases punishable only by the infliction of pecuniary damages is treated by the English law as a capital crime when practised upon the queen consort or the wife of the heir apparent. This is quite consistent with the principle of true justice as explained in the text.

² It only becomes so when *Salus imperii* is taken to meet the personal or class interests of the persons exercising the functions of government. We may on a later page have opportunity for discussing the question how far the growth of an European civilisation which is essentially international should modify the traditional and Hellenic view of patriotism as the highest form of virtue. Our definition of justice has purposely abstained from identifying the "community" with any political organisation such as the "state". The patriot may for the present, if he likes, read our definition in the light of that identification, the "humanitarian" is at liberty, pending future discussion, to understand by the "community" any wider society he pleases. But see what is said a few sentences lower down.

clearest form in which the principle of self-culture or self-realisation finds recognition in popular moral theory, it is less easy to formulate a satisfactory answer. There seems to be no one name in our language for the quality of knowing what it is that you most desire to get for yourself and setting yourself resolutely to obtain it. We might perhaps call such a quality the virtue of self-consistency, or again of intellectual clarity. With Plato, who insists strongly upon the close analogy between the regulation and subordination of passing desires to a general life-purpose and the maintenance of social subordination and order, this virtue shares with the more directly social tendencies the name of *justice*. Yet it is clear that systematic self-realisation may lead a man into actions inconsistent with the principles of justice as we have already described them. In your determination to "do yourself justice" you may find it impossible to make sacrifices which the general interest of the community of which you are a member demands of you, and which are therefore in the proper sense of the word eminently "just". Or on the other hand, you may be so anxious to secure results which you believe to be of value to the community as to neglect voluntarily the opportunities of doing full "justice" to your own powers and capabilities of intellectual or physical development.¹

And what is true of the relation between the individual and the wider community of which he forms a part is also true of the relation between narrower and wider social groups. Just as a man must often do himself less than justice if he is to be just to the claims of family or country, so a family has often to choose between its own good and that of the country, and, with the growth of the sense of international or even world-wide relationship between man and man, it may become necessary even for a nation to choose at times between national advantages and the general interests of civilisation.² And in all these cases of conflict there is no recognised ultimate moral principle upon which a decision might be based. Every one would agree that, where the advantages to be gained are equal,

¹ Cf. Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, p. 172 ff.

² Though, of course, in most cases the interests of civilised humanity as a whole and those of a great civilised nation will probably be the same. It is hard to believe the dissolution of the British Empire, for instance, could ever be called for by the good of civilisation.

it is reasonable to prefer the good of the wider whole; but who is to say whether a great benefit to a family or a nation should or should not be preferred to a lesser benefit conferred upon a nation or upon civilised mankind at large? The illustration is the more worth pondering since there are persons who, though regarding it as self-evident that it is immoral to prefer any personal satisfaction, however great, to the satisfaction of others, very naturally though inconsistently refuse to extend their conclusion to the case of the relation between a single nation and the whole body of civilised communities.

The sum then of the whole matter seems to be just this. There are two ideals of conduct, both sanctioned by the approbation of mankind, which are not finally completely reconcilable, and between which individuals and communities are constantly driven to choose,—the ideals, as we may call them, of intensiveness and of extensiveness. You may set yourself to make some comparatively narrow area of experience, your own, that of your family, etc., as full of permanent and lasting satisfactions as you can, or you may set yourself to procure a lower degree of permanency and certainty of satisfaction for a larger community. In other words, you may live either for the realisation of a very high type of mental culture by yourself, or a few others closely connected with you by circumstances or by community of taste, or for the more general diffusion of a much lower type. You may make the most of yourself and your immediate circle, or you may make a little of your fellows in general. Both types of activity are necessary to the progress of civilisation, and it is impossible on ground of ethical theory to assert that either is to be preferred before the other. The course of any normal life, in so far as it is marked by definite moral purpose, presents us with a series of theoretically unjustifiable compromises between the two.

The examination of any of the principal forms of "virtue" will support this conclusion by showing that we have in the lines popularly drawn between moral and immoral conduct a series of attempts to effect such a compromise between the often incompatible demands of justice to others and a due regard for completeness of individual self-culture. I do not mean that it would be possible to classify some of the current

virtues as self-regarding merely and others as exclusively altruistic. The truth is rather that both these aspects of morality are imperfectly combined in our ordinary notions as to the line of conduct prescribed by any one of the subordinate virtues. Exclusive regard whether to considerations of self-discipline or of justice to others would, in most cases, lead to a widely different classification of acts as moral and immoral from any which at present prevail among civilised persons. Chastity, for instance, or the payment of debts, or the speaking of truth, would find a place alike in a scheme of morality based on purely altruistic considerations, and in one based upon considerations of personal honour and self-consistency of development, but the standard of chastity or truthfulness would be different in the one scheme from what it would be in the other, and different in both from what it is in our present system of morality.

This will, perhaps, be made clearer by the more detailed examination of one or two examples. We may, for instance, profitably consider for a few moments the principles involved in the recognition of the law of strict personal chastity. It is, of course, notorious that there has been historically more variation from one civilisation to another, and even from one stage in the same social development to another, with respect to the degree of license permitted in sexual matters than in almost any other point of morality. Still it would be generally admitted that, according to the most civilised and highest moral standard, all indulgence in sexual relationships is, in ordinary cases, to be condemned beyond that covered by monogamous marriage. As immoral we have therefore to regard (1) all acts whatever of perverted sexual appetite, (2) all gratifications of normal sexual appetite except between persons who have placed themselves publicly¹ in a certain peculiar relation to each other such that it excludes the

¹ I do not say "legally"—because the absence of a *legal* contract does not seem to affect the moral character of the relation provided it receives the public recognition of the society of which the parties are members. Among the first Quakers, if I am not mistaken, a strictly legal marriage was impossible owing to their conscientious objection to the religious formulæ which were until recently a necessary accompaniment of the legal contract. In their case the demand of morality for a public recognition of the assumption of the relations of marriage was met by a simple declaration before a general gathering of members of the sect. And no Romanist would regard an *illegal* marriage as *ipso facto* no marriage at all. See for the facts Charles Lamb's letter on *Unitarian Protests*.

simultaneous contraction of the same relation with any other party, and cannot be dissolved without forfeiting social approbation, except with the concurrence of the community. Individual dissatisfaction has indeed frequently led to the demand that these latter restrictions should be relaxed, either by permitting the simultaneous contraction of more than one such relation, or by allowing the relation to be dissolved at any time upon the mere consent of the parties, or even at the pleasure of one of them, but the general opinion of the mass of persons of high moral character seems at present unmistakably against either change. There can be little doubt that Jowett expressed the sentiments of all but a minority of intelligent men in declaring that monogamous marriage is a great ethical gain to mankind out of which we cannot afford to let ourselves be argued by a sentimental poet.

Assuming, then, the general recognition of the standard just described, let us ask how far that standard agrees with those that would follow from an exclusive application, either of the principle of self-culture, or of that of social justice. It is eminently clear on reflection that even in the interests of mere self-culture, some standard of personal chastity would have to be insisted upon. Random gratification of any and every passing craving of appetite would be absolutely incompatible with the self-discipline apart from which no high level of individual self-culture is attainable. Of course, the degree to which irregular indulgence of the sexual appetite is inconsistent with successful self-cultivation varies with the original endowments of each individual, and the special character of the kind of culture he is anxious to attain. But in every case some sort of self-restraint seems inevitable. This follows partly from the fact upon which we have already dwelt, that permanent satisfaction is only to be obtained by the strict subordination of those cravings which fail to yield lasting and progressive enjoyment to those which, as more successful in this respect, have more "worth."

It is on this aspect of the case that Plato is particularly apt to expatiate, when he is urging the need of sobriety and chastity for the happy life. The cravings of appetite, as he is never tired of telling us, scarcely permit of anything that can be called "satisfaction." You

may still flatter for the time by complacency, but they are always ready on slight provocation to burst out afresh in all their old voracity. Unlike the life of intellectual activity in which every intellectual acquisition leads on to another, the course of satisfaction leads on to an ultimate satisfaction of future acquisition; the life of sensual indulgence, on the contrary, unprogressive round of alternate craving and satiety. It is a sort of hateful *compulsion* in which you can only rise a little higher, you are willing to sink lower. The psychology and organism keep no better game from the continued oscillations, and they are therefore not true or real satisfaction. Judged by the only standard which an intelligent Hedonism can use to gauge the relative value of satisfaction, the standard of permanence, the intense pleasure of appetite, runs very low down in the Hedonistic scale.

Hence too it comes about that no man of any considerable degree of intelligence can be finally contented with a life which is a mere round of sensual enjoyment. There is no lasting source of satisfaction which you can successfully pursue unless you are ready to sacrifice to it the gratifications of mere random appetite. In any life marked by steady and definite pursuit of any ideal of self-culture whatsoever, the appetites and their gratification can from the nature of the case, fill no greater part than that of being subordinate and episodic relaxations in the intervals of the serious quest after the sources of permanent content. To raise them to any higher rank is to turn life into something merely blind and aimless, a self-defeating pursuit of the non-existent. Moreover, one might add, apart from their own barrenness of lasting satisfaction, the appetites cannot be indiscriminately indulged without leading to the formation of a general slackness and irregularity of living, which is hostile

¹ Even the profane Platon who looks more than an idealist upon the extremes of pleasure and the struggle of various virtues to make his pleasures palatable. Platon other than Plato would care how veridical they might be for the easy triumphs enjoyed by the third Caligula and other heroes of Arabian story.

² It might be objected to Plato that the strictly *moderate* indulgence of bodily appetites is necessary for health, and as thus serving to keep the organism free from a wholesome and even a necessary permanent act beneficially upon his general tone. With respect to any degree of indulgence beyond that requisite to health, Pistolet argues not surely holds good. Such indulgence represents no gain, or a disproportionately small one, and is therefore contrary to the supreme law of organic economy.

to the cheashing of any strenuous purpose, selfish or otherwise. For this reason, as well as for the other, no one who sets before himself any high ideal of self-culture can afford to dispense with a very real discipline of the passions. Habits of loose self-indulgence once contracted are not unlikely to prove fatal to those other habits of industry, and order, and steady application upon which all successful self-cultivation depends.

Thus we can see that, apart from all considerations of justice to others, and of the effects of our actions upon them, the mere self-centred purpose of attaining the self-culture of the profound scholar or the supreme artist would of itself prevent a man from making sensual gratification more than a passing and episodic feature of his life. Merely in the interest of our own mental growth, we are constrained to practise up to a certain point the virtue of chastity. But once more, it is equally clear that the restrictions imposed on the gratification of appetite by regard for our own self-cultivation would be in many ways less stringent than those demanded by the law of chastity, as that law is interpreted by the best moral opinion of our age. On the grounds already indicated, regard for our own happiness would lead us to condemn such continuous indulgence in loose and vulgar amours as might be incompatible with the steady and unremitting pursuit of the objects in which we expect to find lasting and unconditional satisfaction. It is not so clear that it would lead us to censure equally the occasional formation of temporary connections of even the most animal kind, provided that they were treated as mere intervals for relaxation and not as the serious business of life. And, as a matter of fact, I suppose we all know of men whose standard of self-cultivation, artistic or intellectual, is high, and then devotion to their intellectual or artistic life sincere, who yet seem to be able from time to time to permit themselves to engage in commonplace debauchery without being perceptibly hindered in the pursuit of their more serious purposes. From the purely self-regarding point of view it is difficult, if not impossible, to pronounce upon the relaxations of such men the condemnation which ordinary Christian morality holds that they deserve.

Again, since wholesale deception and lying seems scarcely compatible with any high ideal of self-culture,¹ a purely self-regarding morality would probably have to condemn the vast majority of cases of adultery, as well as all cases of what is called "seduction." In these cases self-indulgence is complicated with a good deal of hypocrisy and lying, for the purpose of deceiving either the other party to the sexual relation or persons connected with that party, and they would therefore be immoral from the point of view of any one who felt that lying and cheating were a personal disgrace to himself and a stain on his manhood. Cases of permanent extra-matrimonial connections where no one is deceived, and there is no pretence at concealment or only a transparent one, would, however, as far as I can see, escape without censure on these grounds. Lastly, while on purely self-regarding grounds we should have to condemn any sexual relations, even within the limits of monogamous marriage, if they were felt by the persons contracting them to stand in the way of their own full mental development,² we should hardly be justified in censuring the most irregular connections so long as there was evidence that they were really acting as an educational influence upon the parties forming them.

Thus a sexual morality based solely upon the principle of truth to one's own truest self would be in a few cases, where marriage ties would mean arrest of intellectual activity, stricter, but in a vast majority of cases where irregular indulgence would not cause any interference with self-culture, laxer than the morality which at present prevails, in theory at least, among civilised men. The chastity of a man who was chaste only because not to be so would interfere with his pursuit of some intellectual ideal, would amount to a very considerable restraint upon the gratifications of appetite, it would clearly not amount to that absolute suppression of it, except within the limits of monogamous marriage, which is to-day expected

¹ Lying seems incompatible with self-culture, because a lie is a conscious confession of our own impotence. We lie because we are not strong enough—"cannot afford," as the phrase goes, to speak the truth. In so far as we succeed in developing a character strong enough to have permanent control over the sources which yield us the satisfactions we have set our hearts on, we do not need to lie.

² From the standpoint of a merely self-centred ethics, it would surely be as great a sin for the artist or student who really believed that "wife and children" did "drag him down" to be false to his calling by taking a wife as by keeping a mistress.

of the virtuous man. It would lead him at the most to avoid relationships involving a course of falsehood and perjury, and connections which might become serious hindrances to his consistent pursuit of the highest and completest culture within his reach. It would not forbid either a strictly limited indulgence in loose temporary amours, nor the formation of more lasting irregular ties by which his personal intellectual development was likely to be advanced.

Now let us, with more brevity, examine the results which would follow from the exclusive adoption of the principle of social justice as the basis of a doctrine of sexual morality. It is clear that, on the whole, the dictates of justice require a more stringent suppression of animal craving than would be demanded merely in the interests of unhampered self-development. To begin with, it is palpable that in all but the most exceptional cases, adultery, not to speak of "seduction," involves gross disregard of the claims of other persons to full and free self-development. It is in some cases the adulteress, in others the injured family, who are degraded by the act of the adulterer into the position of mere victims of his determination to enrich his own life with every possible form of satisfaction at any cost to the rest of mankind. The adulteress, for instance, is called upon in consequence of her breach with social conventions to forego the society of the intellectual and refined, and along with it all opportunities of attaining those forms of mental culture which directly depend upon the mutual co-operation of numbers animated by a common spirit and purpose. In forfeiting her position in society and her self-respect, she sinks into an existence devoid of any high and strenuously-pursued ideal of self-cultivation, and becomes a contented or discontented plaything and minister to the relaxations of another. Or at best, where the misconduct is so carefully concealed as to lead to no public scandal and loss of social position, she becomes familiarised with habits of intrigue and deceit which must eventually sap the foundations of personal self-respect and destroy the very possibility of consistent and unremitting pursuit of the highest ideals of culture. Such a sacrifice of the possibilities of permanent satisfaction as is implied in this acceptance of the position of a mere minister to another's pleasure cannot consistently be

demanded from any woman by a man who recognises the just claim of other persons to make as much of their own talents and opportunities as he of his.

Again, the vast majority of such uncontented temporary connections a might be admissible from the standpoint of purely egoistic self-culture will fall equally with cases of adultery under the condemnation of true justice. It is scarcely necessary even to call attention to the fact that by claiming the right to the temporary indulgence you would be maintaining your right to condemn a whole class of human beings to the aimless and meaningless life of mere hired minister to the pleasure of your self and others like-minded with you. Sitting on one side all that can be said of the degradation and pollution inseparable from the existence of such a class, the thought of the mere purposelessness and joylessness of the routine life led by the professional "*fille de joie*" should be sufficient to convince us of the utter impossibility of reconciling even occasional loose debauchery with the principles of social justice.

So far, then, the restrictions imposed upon the gratification of sexual desire by regard for the principles of justice would be more stringent than those which would arise from mere prudent considerations of self-interest, inasmuch as justice seems to exert from us an entire abstinence from such gratifications, except upon conditions which leave it open to both parties to make their connection with each other harmonise with the possibility of full personal self-development, *i.e.*, practically except within the limits of monogamous and, in normal cases, lifelong marriage. The only point at which the requirements of "justice" seem less rigorous than those of self-culture is the case of a marriage or other lifelong connection based upon mutual respect and affection, but not conducive to the attainment of the very highest self-culture. Consideration of the unfavourable influence which absorption in family cares and ties may exercise upon my pursuit of my professional studies, or more generally upon my scientific, literary, artistic, or political work, may forbid me to contract relations in which my affections would otherwise find an outlet against which no objections could be urged on grounds of social justice. It is not perhaps altogether

true that "wife and children drag an artist down", in many cases the artist's faculties seem to be quickened and his capacity for work increased by the sense of the new responsibilities engendered by marriage and parentage, but it is clear that if a man is really convinced that permanent family ties would degrade him to the position of a mere hack condemned to produce for the sake of his wife and children hasty and vulgar work which he knows to be unworthy of him, he may owe it to himself to keep aloof from all such entangling connections. It might even conceivably be his duty in the pursuit of his ideal of culture to act with considerable harshness towards persons whose attractions exposed him to the danger of such entanglements. It is perhaps unjust, when one has imperceptibly got into a false position of this kind, to sacrifice a woman's heart to one's art or one's public work,¹ but before you can say that it is not equally immoral to sacrifice art or public work to a woman's happiness, you must be prepared to maintain, as I for one am not, that mere justice is the whole of morality.

If it is not altogether manifest that morality in such cases requires the sacrifice of justice to loyalty to self, it is at any rate abundantly clear that morality, in its aspect of chastity, frequently demands the sacrifice of self to the just claims of others. This follows at once from the admission we have just made that justice requires entire abstinence from those one-sided sexual connections in which one party purchases relaxation at the cost of degrading the other into a mere hired minister to his pleasures. In an artificial society like our own this demand cannot but press very heavily upon the average male member at any rate of those middle classes by whom the intellectual work of society is mostly done. As education becomes more general in any community, there must be a constant corresponding increase in the number of its members who find themselves compelled to depend for maintenance upon the practice of one or other of the learned professions, the possession of a Government appointment, or some other occupation of an intellectual kind. Consequently, unless the whole conditions of existence should be transformed by some radical social

¹ The public—to judge from its criticism of Goethe's treatment of Frederika among other things—seems to be strongly of this opinion.

revolution, it must constantly be becoming more difficult, in a progressive society, for the persons who support themselves by intellectual exertion to obtain early in life a remuneration sufficient to support a wife and family in a manner compatible with refined taste or even with the social requirements of professional status¹. For the average professional man this means that the sexual instincts and the affections and emotions connected with them must either be entirely repressed throughout the very period of life in which they are naturally most vigorous or else indulged in ways which are, as we have seen, inconsistent with elementary principles of social justice. Except in specially favourable cases, the conditions of subsistence are making it increasingly imperative upon the professional classes to remain celibate up to an age at which the labouring population, who are free to follow the dictates of their own physical and psychical nature, are commonly the parents of fair-sized families.

In a different connection we might reasonably point out the probable loss caused by these unnatural social conditions to the community considered as a whole, at present what we wish to insist upon is that the restraint thus rendered necessary is normally injurious to the full development of the individual. In view of the currency of various sentimental delusions about the moral nobility of virginity and celibacy, we cannot too strongly insist that virginity and celibacy are, from the point of view of the individual organism, states of arrested development, and are therefore in themselves bad. So far as virginity is really beautiful to the eye of sound insight, it is so for the same reason as infancy, because it is known to be a transient condition destined in the order of nature to give place to something more perfect. The charm of virginity lies in the promise of maternity, just as the charm of babyhood in the promise of manhood. Lifelong sterility, whether regarded physiologically or psychologically, is as unattractive as lifelong childhood. There is a substratum of sound sense even in the buffoonery of Parolles (*All's Well*, 1. 1). The joyless profligacy of the harlot is a melancholy enough feature of our social life,

¹ The increasing competition of women for posts hitherto held exclusively by men seems likely to aggravate the difficulty. If the demand of women to be allowed to support themselves promised to lead to the creation on a large scale of new departments of intellectual activity, the case might be reversed.

but it might be questioned whether the enforced sterility of the nun is not even more pitiable. One might be tempted to ask whether the ithyphallic emblems of antiquity were not in spirit less obscene and less of a crime against humanity, than the withered and flat-bosomed Madonnas of the cheap "Catholic" print shops. And a humane man might be excused if the sight of the hideous conventual garb led him to say to the champions of certain forms of religion, "For centuries you have had at your disposal the best qualities of civilised womanhood to mould into what you would. And *this*, by your own avowal, is the best you can make of the material, this sexless life out of which all the graces and tender affections that are the charm and glory of womanhood have been, as effectually as was in your power, crushed and extirpated¹. With what face can you ask us, when we look on this, to do anything that would increase your hold on the masculine half of humanity that, thanks to the kindness of Providence, or if you like to call it so, to the unregeneracy of human nature, has hitherto never payed you more than a divided and reluctant submission?" We may at least say of the common seducer who brings a girl on to the streets and the clerical seducer who inveigles her into "vows of chastity" in a nunnery, as Johnson said of Voltaire and Rousseau, that "it is difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them"¹.

Further notice that the life of the virgin or celibate is as imperfect psychologically as it is physiologically. Lifelong contented virginity is only possible when there is an original physical and psychical defect. The entire absence of sexual desire seems for the most part to be connected not only with bodily malformation, but with general psychical defectiveness of intellectual and emotional development. Indeed, when one considers how subtly sexual emotions can be found by careful observation pervading our sympathetic as well as our æsthetic sentiments, one would be surprised if the asexual type of mind were not for the most part marked by deficiency of moral and artistic perception. And even in those rarer cases where sexual feeling appears to be absent without any other noticeable psychological defect, the mental life of the

¹ I need hardly observe that I am here speaking of virginity embraced solely for its own sake, not of the sacrifice of family ties and affections to a career of philanthropic activity, which is quite another thing.

sexually abnormal person must be pronounced morally the poorer and less worthy for its lack of the vast body of experiences connected with the higher and more intellectual developments of conjugal and parental affection

In the case of the normally constituted person the evil effects of enforced virginity continued after the period of physical and mental ripeness are so patent as to be absolutely undeniable. To take the very lowest point of view, there can be, I suppose, no doubt that such complete chastity as the principle of social justice demands from the average young professional man is injurious to bodily health, and consequently a source of vague but deep-seated organic discomfort which frequently issues in impaired intellectual work and a tone of general moroseness and dissatisfaction. If we take into consideration further the psychical consequences of the wholesale suppression of those more cultivated emotions which, in the majority of men of taste and education, form a larger part of the feelings aroused by sex than the mere animal appetite upon which they are ultimately based, the mischief done by enforced abstinence from sexual relations will become even more apparent. It is not merely that the necessity of suppressing the affections and emotions which would find their natural outlet in connection with sexualities brings with it inevitable mental division and dissatisfaction. besides this, the cravings which are denied their natural satisfaction avenge themselves by developing into a morbid and unhappy propensity towards dwelling in thought upon the enjoyments which are forbidden or impossible in fact. It is impossible to observe the unwholesome minuteness of treatment accorded to sins of the flesh in works of casuistry composed by celibate priests without feeling that the explanation of so unpleasing a phenomenon is to be found in the unhappy and uneasy yearning of a nature which ecclesiastical consecrations are impotent to alter after the physical and mental satisfactions which circumstances have put hopelessly beyond its reach. You cannot arbitrarily mutilate human nature by the forcible suppression of a group of the most primitive instincts and all the sentiments based upon them, without at the same time introducing deep-seated disharmony and division into what you leave behind. It is only in the lowest ranks of

organic beings that a creature continues to live after it has been cut in half

I have stated the case against strict chastity thus strongly, not from any desire to apologise for laxity of practice, but because it seems to me that we have, in the case of such chastity as is demanded by the ethical judgment of the best modern men, a duty which cannot, without self-stultification, be made out to be one of self-realisation or self-development. Such self-restraint as is imposed by the consistent pursuit of any fixed ideal is no doubt, though not itself "self-realisation," at least a necessary condition of self-realisation. But abstinence which goes beyond such provident self-restraint is a real physical and psychical sacrifice which must be justified, if at all, by a direct appeal to the claims of others. Chastity demands that certain feelings and emotions which would otherwise have as much right to development as any other part of our nature shall be, where the conditions of life make monogamous marriage impossible, suppressed, without any expectation of personal compensation, in the interests of those who would otherwise have to pay the price of our indulgence. It calls upon us thus not merely to forego satisfactions, but to take upon ourselves, if needs be, physical discomfort and mental discontent, to reconcile ourselves to the surrender of part of our own claims to full and lasting satisfaction in order that a worse thing may not befall other members of our social circle. We were therefore fully justified in instancing it as one of those virtues which afford an example of the practical necessity of a compromise and the theoretical inevitability of a conflict between two ultimately irreconcilable types of moral purpose. It is not based solely or merely upon principles of social justice, for it is a duty we owe to ourselves as well as to others, yet, except for the sake of others, it would not be reasonable to demand so stringent a standard of self-repression. Any high degree of personal chastity involves the frequent subordination of the desire for complete personal self-realisation to the desire to deal fairly and justly by others, and there are also, as we have seen, some cases in which abstention from domestic ties may be demanded by loyalty to self at the cost even of another's happiness. Both the principle of social justice and that of self-realisation find

exemplification in the moral sentiments of mankind upon the subject of personal chastity, and between the two there is, here as elsewhere, a conflict which cannot be decided by appeal to any principle more ultimate and authoritative than either

We should meet with similar results were we to submit to detailed examination the principles which govern the theory and practice of conscientious men in any other department of moral conduct. There is probably no single virtue of all those recognised by popular nomenclature which can be satisfactorily accounted for by either the requirements of full self-development or of social justice considered by themselves. Truth-speaking, for instance, is a case in point. It is easy to see that to a very large extent social justice alone would necessitate a high standard of personal veracity. The object of lying is for the most part to secure our own personal ends by the circumvention of the rest of mankind, in other words, to gain free scope for our own personal self-development by adroitly checking the free self-development of other people. The lie is a typical example of the methods by which other persons are temporarily degraded into the position of mere instruments and means towards ends in which they are not intended to share. Hence the radical absurdity and inconsistency of the liar's conduct. The liar, if he is to gain any advantage by his lying, must assume that the rest of mankind will not meet him with his own weapons. He is to be treated by them as entitled equally with themselves to the pursuit of free self-development, while he treats them as mere instruments of purposes in which they have no interests. Hence, too, the resentment which, as Plato observes, every one feels at deception practised upon himself. The deceived person feels that in being duped he is for the nonce being treated, as we say, like a "tool," instead of being sought after as an intelligent and equal co-operator. It is for this reason that men invariably resent deception, even when it has been practised in what the deceived believed to be their interests.

Again lying, as a tacit confession of one's own weakness, is inevitably distasteful to a vigorous personality with a lofty standard of self-culture, even when it seems most necessary

for personal ends. The lie is essentially a circuitous way to one's goal, and the strong natures habitually prefer the directest roads. So that, in general, truth-speaking is demanded both by loyalty to a high standard of personal self-respect and by social justice. One may hate the lie because it is an infringement of the claims of others, or because it reveals weakness and inconsistency within the self. Yet here, as in the former case, there are all the materials for an irreconcilable conflict between the two types of moral purpose. You may be placed in such a position that you must either deceive or forfeit the objects of a life's labour or even life itself. Or again you may be so circumstanced that you can only serve the interests of your country by uttering a diplomatic falsehood which you feel as a personal disgrace.

Nor, as far as I can see, are there any ultimate grounds for a decision in either of these moral dilemmas. I cannot agree with Polonius that a man who is true to himself must be incapable of falsehood to the world. Admired as the lines in which this sentiment is conveyed are, I cannot but think that Shakespeare showed deeper insight than most commentators suspect by placing them in the mouth of a dotard whose superficial show of worldly wisdom is but a transparent disguise for an infinite ignorance of the minds of those who stood next to him. The reflection, in its indiscriminate generality, is worthy of the man whose sententious folly brought, by a hateful fate, so noble a mind as Hamlet's to its undoing. Generally true the maxim may be, universally true it surely is not. There are times when to be false to another may be the highest loyalty to self, when the spoken "lie" may be the only alternative to falsehood and treason to one's highest ideals.

There is, on this point, apparently a pitiful want of clearness of thought in much of our popular moralising. It is not uncommon to see it argued, as recently in an able article in the *Spectator*, that while you may lie with a good conscience to keep a friend's confidence, you must not deviate by one hair's-breadth from literal accuracy of statement to save yourself from ruin and death. The writers who maintain this view generally abstain from producing the grounds for their decision, wisely so, as I

think For to what moral principle could we appeal to prove that there are no ideals of self-culture of such worth as to justify a departure from general rules which is supposed to be allowable to protect a friend from even slight inconvenience? It is no doubt true that it would be highly immoral to lie for the sake of avoiding every trifling inconvenience, and in practice it is safest to err on the side of over-truthfulness in one's own concerns But this is only to say that a lie is never allowable except in cases where you feel it to be not merely allowable but obligatory It is quite another thing to say that *no* personal satisfactions, however lasting and unconditional, are such as to make that a duty which quite minor satisfactions accruing to some other person may render obligatory For my own part I can find no warrant for bidding any man rate himself and his own capabilities of lasting satisfaction so low as the theory demands, and in practice I do not think a man will be in much danger of becoming a liar so long as he is resolved never to depart from the truth except when the good to be gained, whether for another or for himself, is so great that he dare not throw it away to escape the distastefulness of saying that which is not¹

As to the other point there seems to be a general consensus of opinion Few would deny that in cases where the public safety can only be gained by deceit practised towards an enemy a man may be not only justified in falsehood but be morally obliged to resort to it And most men would probably disapprove of the conduct of a friend who preferred to betray their secrets rather than to wound his own self-esteem by the utterance of a false statement And one may

¹ No one would seriously blame a prisoner of war for using deception to procure his escape—unless, indeed, he has previously given his parole, in which case the violation of the law of justice is obviously greater And as a man is not always the chief sufferer by his own ruin or death the distinction drawn by the writer in the *Spectator* would not always be available for practice As a typical instance of the cases where it seems at least arguable that it is permissible to save one's life by a lie we might take the situation of an English prisoner offered by a Mohammedan captor the choice between Islam and death Of course it would be most immoral for a man who believed Islam to be a devilish delusion to save himself by professing conversion, but it is not clear that we could censure a man who believed all religions to be equally false for accepting life on such terms Is a man called on to suffer martyrdom rather than exchange one faith in which he does not believe for another in which he does not believe either? On the other hand, can we censure as an immoral throwing away of life the action of a man who prefers death to the simulation at his captor's orders of a religious conviction which he does not feel?

wonder how many readers of the *Heart of Midlothian* would have blamed Jeanie Deans if she had made use even of perjury to save an innocent life from the clutches of a monstrous and shameful law. The stickler for exact veracity in this last case would apparently be bound to take his stand upon the principle of loyalty to self. It is more than doubtful whether, from the point of view of social justice, it is better that no witness should perjure himself than that the certainty that witnesses will perjure themselves should lead to the abolition of laws so outrageous as that under which Effie Deans was condemned. The one tolerable argument for truth-speaking in such a case is therefore the one Scott has, with a just instinct, made prominent "If you do not speak the truth you will imperil your soul." But what if one chooses to risk one's soul for the sake of saving another person from unmerited ignominy and death? Can the choice be shown to be in every case morally unreasonable? Let the reader ask himself, by way of reaching a decision, the question already suggested in a former chapter. Would our approbation of Shakespeare's Isabella stand the test if Claudio had not alienated our sympathies by playing the coward? Yet, on the other hand, you could not say universally that it is immoral *not* to lie or to perjure yourself whenever the happiness or life of some other person is at stake. Once again we seem thrown back upon a conflict between the claims of loyalty to self and the claims of justice to others for which there is no satisfactory theoretical solution.

Note once more that the conflict between opposing principles of duty which seems inevitably to arise the moment you insist upon treating *any* ordinary moral maxim as universally valid, is more than that mere conflict between alternative forms of self-realisation which has to be recognised by the most thoroughly egoistic of moral systems. In the case of truth, as in the case of chastity, we find ourselves face to face with at least the possibility of a direct conflict between the duty of self-realisation and the duty of self-sacrifice in the interests not of our own future and more solid happiness, but of some one else. And once more it seems impossible in this as in other cases to lay down any

general principle as to when the claims of self and when the claims of others should be paramount.

A great deal will no doubt depend upon the quality and quantity of the personal satisfaction which is at stake. One can hardly say in general whether it is right for a man to sacrifice himself in certain circumstances for others until one knows something as to the character of the self which would be given up by the act of sacrifice. It would seem reasonable that a self with very little individuality of character and hardly distinguishable in quality from twenty thousand others should be sacrificed upon considerations which would not justify the impoverishing of the species by the loss of a self of rare and unique capacity. For we must remember that it is not only by our acts of self-sacrifice, but also by our own personal attainments and realisations of self, that we make the world as a whole richer and fuller of meaning by our presence in it. The poet or painter who feels himself to be "the eye through which the Universe beholds itself and knows itself divine," may reasonably hold that the whole corporate life of the planetary system is the richer for his power of vision even though his poems or his pictures should never teach a single human being beside himself to see with his eyes. Even the less obviously inspired mathematician might without excess of vanity be allowed to doubt whether he should hazard the loss of his life at the moment when he is on the verge of discoveries that promise to open a new field to human analysis for the sake of results to others which might more than justify the sacrifice of a self not so incapable of being replaced. To take one or two prominent examples from imaginative literature, we all admire the courage and devotion which led Mr Meredith's hero to plunge into the water after the drowning boy, but we also cannot help sympathising with the Earl of Romfrey and Dr Shrapnel in resenting the utter wastefulness of the sacrifice and the insignificance of the results¹. And though we cannot help recoiling from the selfish conduct of Mrs Stevenson's Dr Grierson when, in the famine-stricken

¹ "This is what we have in exchange for Beauchamp! It was not uttered, but it was visible in the blank stare at one another of the two men who loved Beauchamp, after they had examined the insignificant bit of mudbank life remaining in the world in the place of him."—*Beauchamp's Career*, ad fin.